





















**NETAJI  
AND  
INDIA'S FREEDOM**







# NETAJI AND INDIA'S FREEDOM

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1973

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Netaji Bhawan  
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When the Second World War ended in 1945, the Indian Independence Movement was at its lowest ebb. Frustration and despondency gripped the nationalist forces as never before. At that crucial moment in the history of the world the fate and course of the Indian struggle for freedom were entirely unpredictable. In the midst of such bewilderment the Indian National Army descended upon the Indian scene as a God-send. To the Indian people in general, who have had no direct contact with Bose's army in action, it was a new, rejuvenating and revolutionising experience. Political parties and leaders, of whatever complexion, who could not anticipate the tumultuous reaction that Bose's war-time movement produced, revived and rehabilitated themselves in the new revolutionary climate created by him. The British Government were of course fully aware of Bose's activities abroad. But, true to imperial traditions and oblivious of the revolutionary potential of Bose's work, they committed a major error of decision to teach an already demoralised nation a lesson by publicly punishing the INA.

Thus, a revolutionary situation, without parallel in the history of the Indian struggle and pregnant with immense possibilities including a forcible seizure of power, was obtaining in India in 1945-46 as a direct outcome of Subhas Chandra Bose's activities during the war. Bose's personal position at the time has been described by his biographer N. G. Jog : "Bose became the man of the hour .....if, by some miracle, he had returned to India, he would have carried everything before him as Napoleon did after his escape from Elba". Bose's claim to have waged a national war of liberation was vindicated by what Jawaharlal Nehru said on the Red Fort trial of the INA : "The trial dramatised and gave visible form to the old contest : England versus India. It was a trial of strength between the will of the Indian people and the will of those who hold power in India". That Bose had gained his principal political objective was publicly admitted by Gandhi himself



when he said : “.....the whole country has been roused and even the regular forces have been stirred into a new political consciousness and have begun to think in terms of independence”.

By a tragic irony of history, however, “the man of the hour”—perhaps the finest hour in the annals of our struggle—failed to appear. The revolutionary leadership necessary for a forcible seizure of power was to be found neither in the Indian National Congress, dominated at the time completely by the right wing, nor in the parties of the left who were much too unorganised and immersed in puerile, doctrinaire and agitational politics. The communalist parties were simply not interested in anything more than their sectarian aims. The INA which, given the requisite political leadership, could march to power with the masses solidly behind them, did not know if they had a political role to play in the absence of the leader and independently of the Congress. The British Government which had initially miscalculated in their assessment of the revolutionary potential of Netaji and the INA, did not make any mistake in their evaluation and treatment of political parties and groups then operating in India. They skilfully secured the best of the bargain and carried out a political Dunkirk with the least possible harm to themselves.

Regardless of the turn that the history of the subcontinent took in 1947, the fact remains that Subhas Chandra Bose provided to his countrymen in 1945-46—in absentia and as a direct outcome of his wartime activities, a most wonderful opportunity to realise in full the aims of India’s national struggle as proclaimed since the Lahore session of the Indian National Congress in 1929. That those aims were not realised in essentials in 1947 is today beyond dispute. The man who commanded Indian history in 1945-46 paid the price of failing to arrive when independence came to the divided subcontinent in 1947. A rupture in normal and natural historical sequence occurred. Bose’s historical role became irrelevant to the powers that be. And for at least a full decade thereafter Bose was practically a non-person in the new Indian official



world. It is no doubt true that he continued to be a darling of the masses, an object of adulation at anniversaries and a distant source of hope, faith and light to the common people. But, the so-called mystery surrounding his exploits and disappearance brought out apolitical and opportunistic elements to the field, elements who paraded themselves as votaries of a strange and spurious new Bose cult. They were joined by frustrated and defeated politicians. Persistent rumours of Bose being alive and flights of fantasy in regard to his whereabouts and activities promoted by frustrated politicians and his new adherents prevented the development of a sober, scientific, historical appraisal of India's only soldier-statesman of modern times.

The first constructive step in the right direction was taken in 1946 when at the initiative of Sarat Chandra Bose, Netaji's ancestral house was acquired for public purposes and named Netaji Bhawan. In the early fifties, the realisation dawned on a small social service group functioning there that Subhas Chandra Bose was not just a mythical hero, that his rise to the status of *Netaji* was not the result of just one daring act, that he represented a way of life which in its totality was the very essence of India's struggle for freedom and national self-fulfilment. It was further realised that Bose's importance to India had increased, rather than decreased, with the attainment of independence. Work began with collection of materials on his life and work and scientific studies were sought to be promoted. When the necessary minimum materials had been collected, the Netaji Research Bureau was formed in 1957 in the shape of a small committee. It is curious that a British biographer Hugh Toye wrote about Netaji about the same time thus : "The answer must be found in the nature of his dream for India..... In considering this there is to be remembered his predominant feeling for the unity of India and his sense of the ingrained, vested evils which possessed her..... The ills could be removed, the many social and religious components held together and India turned into a modern industrial democracy only by a very strong authority



acting on a well-made, long-prepared plan.” The small group represented in the Netaji Research Bureau went ahead with their task with a sense of purpose and dedication regardless of indifference and apathy all round and even opposition from certain quarters. Contact was established and developed with individuals and institutions all over the world and materials of all possible description on Netaji sought and collected. Indian and foreign scholars and some former associates of Netaji gradually became aware of the importance of the work and participated in the activities of the Bureau in increasing numbers with the passage of time. Fifteen years of silent but intense effort laid the foundation, in the early sixties, of a biographical museum, the nucleus of a research library, a publishing department and a small but active centre of historical research at Netaji Bhawan. The Government started responding to the needs of Netaji Research Bureau in a rather halting and hesitant manner in the early sixties. Cooperative relations with historical societies and research institutes both in India and abroad resulted in mutual benefit and progress, underlining the importance of academic interdependence. The volume of documentary and other material on Netaji’s entire life and the Azad Hind movement abroad reached adequate proportions in the late sixties. The stage was thus set for the development of Netaji Research Bureau into a full-fledged institute of history, politics and international relations, specialising in Subhas Chandra Bose.

Following a visit of Mrs. Indira Gandhi to Netaji Bhawan in 1969, the Government of India started taking a more active interest in Netaji Bhawan and Netaji Research Bureau. This made it possible for the Bureau to launch its long-awaited development programme in 1972.

In 1971 I received encouraging response from the Oriental Institute in Prague and the German-Indian Association in Bonn to my proposal to hold seminars on Subhas Chandra Bose in Europe. After participating in seminars in Prague and Bonn the same year, I availed of the opportunity of studying and conferring with academicians and former associates of Netaji



at various institutes in Vienna, Berlin, Hamburg, London and Zurich. My experiences of the study tour in Europe convinced me that the time was opportune to convene an international seminar on Subhas Chandra Bose and the Indian independence movement at Netaji Bhawan. The unique feature of the seminar would be the bringing together of active participants in historical events on the one hand and academicians and research scholars on the other and thus help evolve historical studies on a live and truly scientific basis. The first International Netaji Seminar was thus held from the 23rd to the 26th January 1973 at Netaji Bhawan. It was undoubtedly the first history conference of its kind in India. It was a resounding success thanks to the great efforts of the Organising Committee and the wonderful cooperation of all participants from inside the country and abroad.

Ten important papers presented at the seminar which conformed to the standard and form required for a publication of high order have been selected for this volume. Carefully edited records of discussion together with reports obtained from active participants in events referred to by the authors have been added wherever possible. Of the appendices, some were provided by the authors themselves. I have added a number of others, of real historical significance and direct relevance to the subjects discussed, obtained from the archives of Netaji Research Bureau. I should like to mention in this regard the Enquiry Committee Report on the Presidency College incident of 1916, Aung San—Sarat Chandra Bose's speeches of 1946, an English translation of the official record of the Bose-Hitler interview, German Foreign Office documents relating to Netaji's secret journey to Berlin from Kabul via the Soviet Union in 1941 and, last but not the least, an English translation of extensive extracts from the Japanese official publication "Subhas Chandra Bose and Japan". German documents have been translated at the Netaji Research Bureau. A tentative translation of "Subhas Chandra Bose and Japan" was obtained some years ago from the Indian Institute of International Studies, New Delhi, since merged



with the Jawaharlal Nehru University. The translation has however been completely revised and re-written at the Netaji Research Bureau. Aung San-Sarat Bose speeches were provided by the University of Rangoon. We are very thankful to the authors for their excellent presentations and particularly for the extensive bibliographies so useful to researchers. The index has been planned with a view to the needs of the enquiring reader.

The Editor and the Netaji Research Bureau are grateful to all such persons and institutions who have helped in any manner to make this publication possible. In the preparation of the manuscript, Mr. Kartic Chakrabarty has done a commendable job. Mr. Naga Sundaram has been of immense assistance in sorting out archival material. Mr. Sugata Bose helped us in the preparation of the index. Mr. Benode C. Chowdhuri supervised the entire process of publication overcoming all manner of disappointments and setbacks that came our way. The printers have tried to do their best in the midst of scarcity of paper, shortage of power and so many other unforeseen impediments. Finally, the Government of India, Ministry of Education, gave us the necessary financial support without which the book would not have seen the light of day.

I have no doubt that "Netaji and India's Freedom" will take its rightful place among the most valuable works on the life and times of Subhas Chandra Bose.

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*The 6th September 1975*

**Sisir K. Bose**



# CONTENTS

EDITOR'S NOTE	v
1. Themes in a Political Biography of Subhas and Sarat Chandra Bose <i>by Leonard A. Gordon</i> Discussion	1
2. The Bengal Student as I knew Him 1909-1916 <i>by Edward Farley Oaten</i> Discussion	28
Appendix 1 : The Oaten Incident—Subhas C. Bose	
Appendix 2 : Discipline in Presidency College	
(a) Government Statement	
(b) Report of the Enquiry Committee	
3. Subhas Chandra Bose and the Burmese Freedom Movement <i>by Jan Becka</i> Appendix : Welcome to Sarat Chandra Bose —Aung San Sarat Chandra Bose's reply	54
4. Japanese Sources for the Study of the Indian Independence Movement : The Example of World War I <i>by Grant K. Goodman</i> Discussion	76
5. The Great Escape <i>by Sisir K. Bose</i>	111
6. My Fiftyfive Days with Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose <i>by Bhagat Ram Talwar</i> Appendix 1 : German Foreign Office Documents Appendix 2 : Report of Mr. Santimoy Ganguli	152



7. An Assessment of Netaji's Policy of Co-operation  
with the Axis Powers during World War II 249  
*by Alexander Werth*  
Discussion
8. India's Independence and the Axis Powers :  
Subhas Chandra Bose in Europe during the Stra-  
tegic Initiative of the Axis Powers 1941-42 261  
*by Milan Hauner*  
- Appendix 1 : Draft Declaration on India by Axis Powers  
Appendix 2 : Bose-Hitler Interview
9. Bose's Influence on the Formulation of Japanese  
Policy toward India and the INA 316  
*by Joyce Lebra*  
Appendix : Subhas Chandra Bose and Japan, 4th Section,  
Asian Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs,  
Government of Japan, 1956
10. Subhas Chandra Bose and the Indian Communist  
Movement : A Study in Co-operation and  
Conflict 422  
*by Gautam Chattopadhyay*  
Discussion  
Appendix 1 : International Press Correspondence  
Vol. 13, No. 52, 1933—The New Party  
of Bose and what should be our atti-  
tude to it  
Appendix 2 : Our Needs and our Duties by Subhas  
Chandra Bose—National Front, Vol. 1,  
No. 36, October, 1938  
Appendix 3 : Carry Forward the Heritage of Stru-  
ggle by Subhas Chandra Bose—  
National Front, Vol. 2, No. 1,  
February, 1939.



NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS	461
INDEX	465

*Frontispiece*

Subhas Chandra Bose    Berlin 1942

*Maps*

Bose's escape route from Calcutta	132
Bose's escape route across the Indian frontier and Afghanistan	176







# THEMES IN A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY OF SUBHAS AND SARAT CHANDRA BOSE\*

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## I

A full and critical political biography of Subhas and Sarat Chandra Bose has yet to be written. There are a number of fine studies of Subhas Bose when he became Netaji and headed the Indian National Army, for example, by Hugh Toye and K. K. Ghosh. But neither of these books pretends to be a full biography ; Toye skims the pre-I.N.A. period quickly, while Ghosh does not deal with it.<sup>1</sup> Some of the works which are efforts at full biographies suffer from insufficient research and overzealous adulation. None of the biographies makes proper use of Congress files, Calcutta Corporation, Government of India and Government of Bengal records, newspapers, or of the private papers and views of contemporaries. The Netaji Research Bureau has done a splendid job of collecting and publishing writings and correspondence of Subhas and Sarat Bose, but there is still much to be done including a complete bibliography, the collection of more source material including unpublished letters, and, hopefully, the encouragement of a number of biographies which will draw upon this material.

A proper biography of the two Boses would chart out their family background and place in Bengali society ; would detail their development, roles and contributions to the national movement ; would show the personality factors salient to their political activities ; and would include an analysis of the institutions and movements, local, regional, national and international, in which they participated. Such a study would also analyse the most important themes which mark their lives.

\* Paper presented at Netaji Bhawan, Calcutta, on 23 January 1973  
Chairman : Dr. R. C. Majumdar.



I try to suggest below some of the themes which I believe to be most important.

One more caveat is essential before presenting these themes. Most studies focus on Subhas Bose, ignoring the vital ways in which his elder brother Sarat complemented him, supported him financially, emotionally, and politically, and operated skillfully in arenas like the Bengal Legislative Assembly and Calcutta Corporation which were not as congenial to Netaji. An example of the difference in style and approach as well as the complementary nature of their political work may be found in this passage from the Government of Bengal's "Summary of Political Events in the Province of Bengal during the year 1939"<sup>2</sup> :

Although Government was not embarrassed in maintaining its majority, this Bill (Bengal Money Lenders Bill) as well as the Calcutta Municipal (Amendment) Bill, was fought tooth and nail, and credit is due to the Congress for the parliamentary manner in which it behaved. Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose was indeed to be found outside the House threatening to bring the Calcutta Municipal employees out on strike : but in the Assembly his brother, Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose, as leader of the opposition, exposed himself to no criticism for similar activities.

The general point I am making is that the Boses found different approaches congenial, especially in dealing with the British Raj, but at the same time worked closely together. A proper biography will have to chronicle and analyse the work of both. Sarat Bose's important work in the Calcutta Corporation, his astute management of the 1936-37 and 1946 election campaigns for the Congress, his leadership of the opposition in the Bengal Legislative Assembly, 1937 to 1941, his crucial role in the formation of the Progressive Coalition Ministry in 1941, and his leadership of the movement for a United Bengal, have scarcely received any attention. And what is remarkable is the close cooperation of the Bose brothers and the rarity with which they differed.

Although Sarat Bose was the less charismatic as a public figure, his considerable accomplishments merit the attention of the historian and biographer as do those of his younger brother. And their future biographer must also try to under-



stand the remarkable unity of action by the Bose brothers. They seemed to differ on no major public issue and could step into each other's shoes at a moment's notice.

## II

In writing about the life of a man, or in this case of two men, different writers will certainly choose different themes upon which to concentrate. The only test is which set of themes makes best sense of the man and of the data available for the study of his life. I have chosen what I believe are three vital themes for consideration here : relationships with Establishment institutions of the Raj ; nationalist involvements and conflicts ; and views and activities vis-a-vis the Hindu-Muslim question. Others may want to develop other themes : Dilip Roy has explored the mystical side of Subhas Bose's life ; some writers may want to dwell on Subhas Bose's abilities as a military organizer in the I.N.A. period, or Sarat Bose's achievements as a lawyer. There is an element of arbitrariness in such a choice, but choices must be made because the biographer like any other historian can only present and assent some of the evidence and shape it into a more or less compelling pattern. In the case of men as political as the Boses, one must certainly try to connect these individuals with the development of their society and the polity in which they participated. One must also try to give the broader historical forces as well as the personal or individual factors their due place without reducing either set to the other.

By Establishment institutions, I mean those legal, educational, administrative, and governing bodies or arenas of British India in which the Raj directly or indirectly laid the groundrules or chose the membership. In this category I include the Calcutta High Court, Calcutta University, the Calcutta Corporation, the Bengal Legislative Council and Assembly, the Indian Civil Service, and the administrative structures of the British Raj in which both Indians and Europeans participated. I put nationalist organizations run by and for Indians in a different category.



The Bose brothers were descended from fairly prominent Kayastha families and thus at the outset had a position in the hierarchical society of Bengal in which they took some pride. In letters which both wrote to officials of the Government of India while they were imprisoned, the Bose brothers demanded those privileges which they felt due to them by their position in Bengali society as well as their accomplishments as public men. These small incidents point to the closeness they felt to their family and caste traditions and to their sense of their high status in Bengal.<sup>3</sup>

Building from such a base, Sarat Bose moved on to high professional achievement. He graduated with honours in English literature from Presidency College in 1907 and eventually was called to the bar from Lincoln's Inn, London, in 1914. The Bose brothers both grew up in Cuttack, but with the rise of their generation, the family established a home for itself in Calcutta. The family house was on Elgin Road and Sarat Bose later built a second house across the way at Woodburn Park.

One striking feature of the career of Sarat Bose was that he was deeply involved both with Establishment and with nationalist organizations, even in ways that might appear contradictory. In the year following the Swadeshi agitation, with which he was sympathetic, Sarat Bose built up a very successful practice at the Calcutta bar. He specialized in company law, though in later years he occasionally appeared in political cases. Except during two periods of imprisonment, Sarat Bose continued his practice and was the main support for his family including his younger brother Subhas. In addition, Sarat is said by many to have made generous contributions to the revolutionary movement in Bengal.<sup>4</sup> So at the same time he was working to end the Raj, he was profiting, indeed living, from his earnings at the bar. He also had English friends and gained the respect of Englishmen for his legal acumen.

It is no surprise, in light of the above, that Sarat Bose found the chambers of the Calcutta Corporation and the Bengal Legislative Assembly more congenial political forums



than militant demonstrations, revolutionary "actions", or mass organized violence (like the I.N.A.). Though not an unaggressive or retiring man, he did not seek the spotlight in the various ways that Gandhi, Nehru, or Subhas Bose might be said to. Sarat Bose's energies and feelings of aggression and nationalism were channelled into those forms of public work he found most comfortable. Upon occasion, usually when Subhas Bose was absent from the scene, Sarat Bose had to come forward and speak for the Bose group. What one of his colleagues at the bar called his "combatative disposition" found its fulfilment, but in different ways from which similar urges moved Netaji.<sup>5</sup>

One might argue that Sarat Bose's legal career was or became in mid-life a means to an end. It enabled him to support his own and others' works in politics. But I think this would be too simple. He became immersed in the law and delighted in its challenges and confrontations. His greatest skill was said to be in cross-examination. The contest for truth, justice, and accomplishment drew him in. He did use his earnings to support activities the British called subversive, but this did not negate his deep involvement with the law. The law and nationalism became the twin goddesses of his life.<sup>6</sup>

Subhas Bose had a different and more ambivalent attitude toward Establishment institutions. From his youth, he displayed a peculiar combination of attitudes toward all forms of authority. On the one hand he wished to do well by the standards employed by these authorities ; on the other hand he also wished to turn against those authorities which he felt were restricting him and overcome them. In terms that he himself employed, he strove to be both a "good boy" and chief "mischief maker".<sup>7</sup> A certain pattern is repeated again and again in his life, particularly at crucial moments of indecision and choice.

A few examples may suffice to demonstrate this pattern. During his first year at Presidency College, Subhas Bose and a friend left on a pilgrimage to find a guru in north India. Since the two young men departed without leaving word where they



were going, their families were frantic to learn their whereabouts. The journey may be seen as a religious quest and also as an expression of the feelings of the rebellion against his parents, especially his father, who always appeared distant to the ninth child in a large family. Young Subhas had come to feel "more at home when away from home", and his long trip to north India without informing his family was a signal to them that he wished to travel on his own without abiding by their authority.<sup>8</sup>

A major event in the life of Subhas Bose and one which brought him considerable attention in Bengal took place while he was a student at Presidency College in 1916. This was the Oaten Affair. Briefly, a number of students at the College beat a Professor, E. F. Oaten, who, it was alleged, had insulted India and "malhandled" Indian students. It has never been clear whether Bose was one of those who actually hit Oaten or whether he masterminded the attack as some have asserted.<sup>9</sup> Whatever Bose's actual role in the affair, he openly admitted his participation. After testimony in the case was heard, it was decided, *inter alia*, that Bose was to be expelled. The punishment was harsher than Bose had expected for he had written to a friend before the hearings that, "I am well-known as a 'good student' .....the vast majority of the public feel that I am innocent, Ashu Babu knows of me personally and the evidence of the orderly against me is much too weak. So, there is every possibility of my being found innocent and let off."<sup>10</sup> Years later, Dilip Roy wrote that the affair made Bose a hero and a marked man. In his autobiography, Bose gave the incident a crucial significance in his own development :

Little did I then realise the inner significance of the tragic events of 1916. My Principal had expelled me, but he had made my future career. I had established a precedent for myself from which I could not easily depart in future. I had stood up with courage and composure in a crisis and fulfilled my duty. I had developed self-confidence as well as initiative, which was to stand me in good stead in future. I had a foretaste of leadership—though in a very restricted sphere—and of the martyrdom that it involves. In short, I had acquired character and could face the future with equanimity.<sup>11</sup>



Although it may well be that this was the most important event in Bose's late adolescence, it does appear that writing twenty years after the event, he was playing down the fears he probably had about his future life and was making a smoother connection with his nationalist career than existed. This was another instance in which one who had been a "good student" thought that such a reputation would make the punishment for his "mischief" lighter. In contrast to his earlier rebellion in sneaking away in search of a guru, this revolt had an element of nationalism in it. It was directed against one who was felt to be a cold and harsh representative of the British educational system in India. A year later, Bose, was permitted to join Scottish Church College to finish his college education.<sup>12</sup> So Bose wanted to achieve within the system and yet rebel against it. The ambivalence he had about the educational system, he later showed toward Western culture in general, the I.C.S., the Indian National Congress, and the Government of India.

From 1917 to 1919, Bose attended Scottish Church College, gaining his B.A. with honours in philosophy. He then joined the post-graduate class reading psychology. At this time, Bose and some other students petitioned the Government to obtain a University Military Training Corps. Although he neglected sports as a youth, Bose eagerly sought military training in India and later when he was at Cambridge.<sup>13</sup> This marks a lifelong fascination with the military and touches on the theme of strength and weakness. He accepted the British assessment of the feeble physical condition of Bengalis, but he insisted that it was due to lack of proper training. Believing that military and technological skills and proper methods of organization were the most important lessons that Indians could learn from Europeans, Bose seized the opportunity for military training and later called upon others to do likewise.<sup>14</sup> The worship of the goddess Kali as power and his admiration for the military might of India's European conquerors seemed to flow together into a single channel. Bose's quest for military training and his aim to meet the British equally in a military context started



with this rudimentary course during his World War I student days.

Hardly had Bose settled into his post-graduate studies when his father urged him to go to England and prepare for the Indian Civil Service examination. He expressed his doubts about this venture in a letter to Hemanta Sarkar :

I am facing a most serious problem. Yesterday the family made an offer to send me to England...My primary desire is to obtain a university degree in England ; otherwise I cannot make headway in the education line. If I now refuse to study for the Civil Service, the offer to send me to England will be put into cold storage for the time being (and for all time)... On the other hand, a great danger will arise if I manage to pass the Civil Service examination. That will mean giving up my goal in life.<sup>15</sup>

He decided to take his family's offer and sailed for England to prepare at Cambridge for the I.C.S. examination. At Cambridge, he studied history and politics, became a leader of the Bengali students in England, and learned about English life at first hand. Dilip Roy wrote that Bose had malevolent feelings toward the British when in college,<sup>16</sup> but his new experiences complicated these feelings. In his autobiography, Bose said relations with the British were cordial, never close, and that beneath the surface the British felt superior and the Indians ".....sensitive (perhaps ultrasensitive) with regard to our self-respect and national honour".<sup>17</sup> Further evidence for Bose's feelings is given in a 1919 letter :

Whether one wills it or not, the climate of this country makes people energetic. The activity you see here is most heartening. Everyman is conscious of the value of time and there is a method in all that goes on. Nothing makes me happier than to be served by the whites and to watch them clean my shoes. Students here have a status—and the way the professors treat them is different. One can see here how man should treat his fellow man. They have many faults—but in many matters you have to respect them for their virtues.<sup>18</sup>

Bose had a deep-seated ambivalence toward the British. His feelings were a compound of admiration, envy, and hatred. Although he did not make any close English friends, he did maintain respect for Englishmen as individuals. Bose studied hard and spent most of his time within a small circle of Indians,



who served as a shield from a potentially hostile native population.<sup>19</sup>

Bose's high need for achievement, particularly by British standards, led him to work hard the I.C.S. examination ; he finished fourth in the competition. Then, after a good deal of self-searching and exchange of letters with his brother Sarat and with C. R. Das, Bose decided to resign from the I.C.S. and take up "national service", that is, join the national movement in some suitable capacity.<sup>20</sup> He had wanted to gain respect from the British by excelling in an examination prescribed by them for their elite service in India, but he then expressed his personal and nationalist antipathy to them by resigning. Following the paradigm suggested, Bose was again the "good student" and the "mischief-maker".

Bose corresponded about his desire to resign from the I.C.S. with his older brother Sarat, rather than write directly to his father. From his early years, Bose had close and warm relations with Sarat and used the latter as a buffer in dealing with his parents. Sarat wanted him to take up the I.C.S. career for which he had qualified, but Subhas was a strong-willed young man and he chose to chart his own course rather than that picked for him by his family. The I.C.S. decision was a rebellion both against the British and against his own parents.

It is possible to carry on the study of Subhas Bose's ambivalence toward the Establishment by more and later examples from his life. Time does not permit that here. But it is interesting to ask why Subhas Bose could not have a career besides his "national service" in the way that his elder brother Sarat and also his other brothers did. I believe that it was partly a matter of temperament and partly a matter of timing. Sarat's career flowered at a time when the national movement was in the doldrums ; Subhas Bose came to maturity at the moment when Indian nationalism was becoming a mass movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and others.

Subhas Bose did take some part in the administration of Calcutta as Chief Executive Officer of the Calcutta Corporation and later as Calcutta's mayor. But his many prison terms



and his own inclinations led him rather into nationalist agitation than into the council or assembly chambers. And I believe that even his personal relations with Englishmen were different from those of his brother Sarat's—on the whole much more distant and antipathetic. Sarat could reach beyond his patriotic feeling to engage in lively and friendly conversation with the "enemy" as Mr. L. G. Pinnell, I.C.S., who was his "jailer" when Sarat Bose was under house arrest in Kurseong, has testified in the official records and in a personal interview.<sup>21</sup> Sarat had a range of European colleagues in the Corporation, at the bar, and later in the legislative assembly. Mr. I. P. Mukherjee, a junior colleague of Sarat Bose at the bar, has told of how Mr. W. W. Page, a leader of the European Association and thus a political opponent of the Boses, gave Sarat Bose many of his cases when he went on leave.<sup>22</sup> Page offered Sarat Bose his professional respect and trust even while he fought him in politics. Subhas Bose had European friends, mainly made in the 1930's, but they were usually not of the nationality of his rulers and were not in official positions in the Raj. Perhaps one can say that Sarat Bose was a member of the Establishment as well as an attacker of it; Subhas Bose was more completely the outsider, an Indian against the Raj.

### III

In the earlier nationalist period through the Swadeshi years, Bengalis, like their colleagues from Bombay, played a leading role in the movement. In the first 32 years of the Congress, nine Bengalis were presidents of the Congress for a total of 12 years. During the Swadeshi agitation, Bengal became the cynosure of Indian politics. But this agitation did not generate a continuing movement or a mass organization. Indeed, after the Surat split, the Moderates dominated a rump Congress, while many of the Extremists were imprisoned or faded from the scene.<sup>23</sup>

During these same years, the partition of Bengal was revoked, the Bengali-speaking area was reunited and Bihar and Orissa separated from Bengal. At the same time the capital of



British India was shifted to Delhi in 1912. While the central government was close at hand in Calcutta, the Bengalis and the non-official European community of Calcutta had what some from other regions felt was too large a voice in influencing the Government of India. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, Bengali leaders were able to turn local and regional issues into national ones. This became impossible once the capital was shifted. The levers of power were no longer at hand. The Bengalis had to take their place in the queue along with those from other regions.

At the end of the First World War, the Congress blossomed anew under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and began to mobilize masses of Indians. In the Gandhian years, the Mahatma was able to recruit men from almost every province who were more attached to him and to the central organization than to any regional leader or group. Those Bengalis who were attached to Gandhi included those with a genuine ideological commitment to Gandhism and those who wanted to play on the winning side. I call all of these men Bengal's Gandhians. As examples I would give Prafulla Ghose, Dr. B. C. Roy, and Nalini Ranjan Sarkar (when he was with the Congress). The Boses—the dominant faction in Bengal politics after the death of C. R. Das—often worked with the Gandhians, but they also went their own way and had stronger regional support than Bengal's Gandhians.<sup>24</sup>

It is striking that though Bengalis worked in the nationwide Congress campaigns of these years, the two major revolts against Gandhian domination of the movement were led by Bengalis. The first of these was the Swaraj Party, presided over by C. R. Das ; the second was the Congress crisis of 1939 precipitated by Subhas Bose's success in the presidential election of that year. We may also note that in the 57 years since 1916 only two Bengalis, Das and Subhas Bose, have been presidents of the Congress. The center of gravity of Congress leadership shifted from the coastal bases in Bombay and Calcutta to the Gangetic heartland and Gujarat.

One continuing difference between the Bengal and national



Congress was over the means of nationalist struggle. From 1907 the revolutionary movement was stronger in Bengal than elsewhere in India and from 1921, the Bengal revolutionaries played a very important part in Bengal Congress politics. The support of these revolutionary groups was essential for a Congress leader. But, this very support brought the antipathy of the Governments of India and Bengal and of the Gandhian leadership. In the factional politics of the Bengal Congress after the death of C. R. Das, the Bose group emerged as the dominant faction, but it was tied to its revolutionary supporters. Subhas Bose was not antagonistic to the use of violence to achieve independence for India, though formally he accepted the code of non-violent mass struggle as dictated by Gandhi. According to former revolutionaries, Subhas Bose and thus Sarat Bose as well knew in general what the revolutionary groups were planning though neither entered into the details of their plotting.<sup>25</sup>

The Government of India view of Sarat Bose's revolutionary connections was summarized in his "information sheet"<sup>26</sup>:

He has always been careful to keep in the background and to avoid being implicated personally in any outrage, but the Bengal Government is satisfied that he has been a direct supporter of the terrorist campaign, which he has assisted with advice and money, both before and after the perpetration of outrages. In particular, he was believed to have instigated and financed the last attempt to murder Sir Charles Tegart, to have afforded support and encouragement to the party which raided the Chittagong Armoury in 1930, and to have been aware of the arrangements made to shelter the absconding members of this party.

Sarat Bose was also a leading member of the section which turned the Calcutta Corporation, of which he was Councillor and Alderman, into a source of revenue for the Congress and Revolutionary parties, and it was through his influence that a large number of terrorists on release from imprisonment, were given appointments as teachers in Calcutta Schools.

The revolutionary connection had a number of consequences for the Boses. First, the Governments of India and Bengal believed that their ties to the revolutionaries were even closer than outlined above. It was suggested that Subhas Bose was in fact



the leader of the Jugantar Party and the Bengal Volunteers and that he utilized the funds and patronage of the Calcutta Corporation for their activities. These suspicions led to the imprisonment of Subhas Bose from 1924 to 1927 and to prison and enforced exile from 1932 to 1937 as well as to the imprisonment of Sarat Bose from 1932 to 1935.<sup>27</sup>

Second, the revolutionary connection was one of the factors which hampered more satisfactory relations between the Bose group and the Gandhian High Command. There were other factors as well, undoubtedly, but Gandhi's anxieties about the Boses' softness on violence made him constantly on guard against them. The imprisonment of many revolutionaries and suspected revolutionaries from Bengal was a concern of Bengal Congress leaders. They constantly called for the release of these men (and women). But this could never be as important an issue for Gandhi and his inner circle. Working for the release of Gandhian satyagrahis was one thing ; applying pressure for the release of revolutionaries was another.<sup>28</sup>

Subhas Bose's differences with the Gandhian outlook were forcefully expressed in his book *The Indian Struggle* completed while he was in Europe in the 1930's. The book contained praise as well as sharp criticism of Gandhi. Bose saw Gandhi as the head of an older, reformist group of nationalists backed by wealthy capitalists. He borrowed Marxist categories identifying his political allies and himself with the masses of Indians and seeing Gandhi, whom he admitted was accepted by the masses as their leader, as the chief of the oppressive forces. He was viewing Gandhi and the High Command and the Government of India as restraining forces on the radical and militant nationalist forces with which he identified.<sup>29</sup> This is an example of what Bose called the "rebel mentality", which he later said he had had since his youth. He not only rejected the authority of the Government of India, but questioned the authority and wisdom of the controlling group within the nationalist organization with which he worked. Bose saw himself on the side of reason, science, and modern values against the most deplorable traits of superstitious, enfeebled



India which Gandhi was exploiting. Bose felt that in her struggle—he often used the language of a military campaign—against the British, India needed a strong and vigorous leader, perhaps himself, and not a hesitating, confused, reformist guru.<sup>30</sup>

From the mid-1920's socialist and communist ideology began to spread among Indian nationalists. Subhas Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru were among the Congress leaders who adopted socialist ideas, but joined no formal leftist groups such as the Congress Socialist Party, the Royists, or the Communist Party of India. Nonetheless, these organized groups considered Bose and Nehru spokesmen for the left, important because of their wide political following. Many of the leftists worked within the Congress organization and aimed to change its program and capture control of it. Strains grew greater between the leftists and the rightist Gandhians as the 1930's progressed. The conflicts were over both issues and power. Gradually the Congress program became more socialistic, but the organization was still dominated by Gandhi's men.<sup>31</sup>

Gandhi, a skillful manager of human and financial resources, tried to control the conflict between left and right by co-opting leftist leaders as Congress president. In 1936 and 1937, Nehru served in this position and a number of Congress Socialists joined the Congress Working Committee. Then in 1938, Gandhi offered the Congress presidency to Subhas Bose who readily accepted. Bose cooperated with the Gandhians in the Congress executive during 1938, but the ideological differences between left and right as well as personal animosities remained.<sup>32</sup>

At the end of 1938, the Gandhians, in their usual fashion, put forward a candidate for the Congress presidency, whom they expected to be returned without contest. First they offered Maulana Azad, but when ill health required him to step aside, they nominated Pattabhi Sitaramayya. Subhas Bose responded with the declaration that he would step aside if another leftist ran against Sitaramayya, but if none did, then he would stand for another term.<sup>33</sup> The Gandhians stated that ".....it



was unnecessary to re-elect Subhas Babu".<sup>34</sup> But Bose refused to be intimidated and won the election by 1580 to 1375 votes for Sitaramayya. Most leftists had united behind Bose who gathered regional strength from the Punjab, Kerala, Karnatak, the United Provinces, as well as his native Bengal.<sup>35</sup>

After the election, Gandhi announced that "the defeat is more mine than his (Sitaramayya's)....." Gandhi, however, was against rash moves because, he said, "After all Subhas Babu is not an enemy of his country".<sup>36</sup> Bose issued a statement answering Gandhi, which said in part :

I do not know what sort of opinion Mahatmaji has of me. But whatever his view may be, it will always be my aim and object to try and win his confidence for the simple reason that it will be a tragic thing for me if I succeed in winning the confidence of other people but fail to win the confidence of India's greatest man.<sup>37</sup>

This passage embodies political strategy as well as the follow-up to Bose's usual desire to challenge authority. He wanted to beat the Gandhian candidate and did ; but at the same time he wanted Gandhi's approbation. He wanted the satisfaction of victory over authority and approval from the victim as well.

On February 22, twelve Gandhian members of the Working Committee resigned after Bose refused to retract what they considered an "aspersion" against them, that they were going to compromise with the Government on the federation aspects of the 1935 Government of India Act. Although Bose was not aware of it, the Gandhians were preparing to put him in his place. They wanted a homogeneous Working Committee and a policy based on the "will of the majority". They saw the forthcoming Congress session as a test of leftist and rightist strength, and an opportunity to assess Congress confidence in Bose's or in Gandhi's leadership.<sup>38</sup>

Although the left had given Bose solid support for the presidency, the victory itself brought jostling for places and second thoughts by some. The Congress Socialists, who wavered between national unity and leftist unity, thought that the Working Committee should be divided between leftists and rightists



with the former having an edge. Bose himself was apparently undecided, but seemed to feel that he needed the Gandhians to run the Congress organization and he did not want to split the Congress.<sup>39</sup> With the matter of the new Working Committee still in doubt, the annual Congress session convened at Tripuri. Bose fell ill with fever and spent most of the time in his tent. Sarat Bose served as his younger brother's spokesman. Gandhi was away in the princely state of Rajkot attending to what he thought vital political matters.

The confrontation between left and right at Tripuri came down to a controversy over the wording and passage of the Pant Resolution put forth by the Gandhians. It stated, in part, that "...Mahatma Gandhi alone can lead the Congress .....and requests that the President.....nominate the Working Committee in accordance with the wishes of Gandhiji".<sup>40</sup> Some leftists tried to dilute the resolution, some opposed it. In the open voting on the resolution, the Congress Socialists abstained and the measure passed. The Socialists and Communists chose Gandhi and nationalist unity, forgot leftist unity, and left Bose to his fate.<sup>41</sup>

The passage of the Pant Resolution put Bose in a difficult position. The "wishes of Gandhiji" were interposed in the usual Congress procedure of having the president nominate the Working Committee. A long, sometimes embittered, correspondence between Subhas and Sarat Bose, Nehru, and Gandhi followed the Tripuri Congress and lasted until the end of April. In conciliatory tones, Bose pleaded with Gandhi to make a compromise on the selection of the Working Committee. Bose argued that a heterogeneous Committee was what circumstances required and he was willing to go more than half way. Nehru was in favour of some sort of compromise, but Bose was furious at Nehru for what he thought was a betrayal of the left. Given the choice of Bose or Gandhi, Nehru sided with Gandhi. Gandhi, for his part, was adamant and seemed determined to oust Bose. Gandhi argued that it would be impossible for a heterogeneous Committee to operate effectively. Gandhi urged Bose to select his own Committee. Bose answered that he felt bound



by the unconstitutional Pant Resolution.<sup>42</sup> Bose never directly answered Gandhi's challenge to choose a Working Committee of leftists. He did not have united support on the left and he did not want to confront the danger of splitting the Congress.

A number of other issues entered the correspondence : the prospects for violence ; the issuing of an ultimatum to the British ; the Congress economic program ; Bose's "aspersion" against the Gandhians on the federation scheme. Although the leftists were not united on these issues, they must not have been happy at the evidence of their weakness in a crisis and the treatment meted out to Bose.

The stalemate continued until the A.I.C.C. met in Calcutta at the end of April. Attempts to keep Bose in office proved abortive and Bose resigned. Rajendra Prasad, at Gandhi's urging, became Congress President and Dr. B. C. Roy and P. C. Ghosh, two of Bengal's foremost Gandhians, were added to the new Working Committee.<sup>43</sup>

After Bose's resignation, he was subjected to severe criticism from other members of the amorphous left. Bose soon formed the Forward Bloc which he asked all leftists to join. This call went unanswered, so Bose proposed an even looser grouping, the Left Consolidation Committee. This alliance as well could not bring together the warring factions of the left which were fighting for support and pre-eminence.<sup>44</sup>

The struggle for control between the Bose group and the Gandhians also went on in the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee. By the end of 1939 the Bengal Congress was split into an ad hoc Gandhian body and the Bose or majority faction. During that same year Bose had issued a challenge to the Congress High Command asserting his right to criticise them and even demonstrate against them. He was answered by a suspension from Congress executive positions for three years.<sup>45</sup> Although Bose had some support in Bengal and in a few other areas such as the Punjab and Maharashtra, he became more and more isolated from the center of nationalist power in the Congress.

Even on the issue of forming a coalition ministry in Bengal



with Fazlul Huq, the Gandhians managed to prevent such an inter-communal alliance until 1941. By then Subhas Bose was gone from India and Sarat Bose was about to be imprisoned for the duration of the war. The Gandhians with superior manpower and tactics had cut the Boses down. One of Subhas Bose's last acts in India during 1940 was to urge Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy, to bring down the Muslim-dominated ministry in Bengal, since the Boses themselves could not do so. Subhas Bose was ready to take the assistance of the Raj against which, shortly before, he had called for an ultimatum.<sup>46</sup>

Sarat Bose as well was intimately involved in these struggles. After spending 1941 to 1945 in prison, he came out and rejoined the Congress High Command. He ran the Congress election campaign in 1946 and briefly served as a minister in the Interim Government. But he was dropped from the cabinet when Muslim Leaguers joined and some time after that resigned from the Congress over the issue of partitioning Bengal as part of the division of India.<sup>47</sup>

The fact that the most important Bengal Congress faction was more often out of favour than in with the Gandhian High Command seriously weakened the voice of Bengal in central Congress decision-making. We cannot, of course, know how things might have gone had the Boses and the Gandhians been more in tune, but one is forced to the supposition that it might have been better for Bengal.

#### IV

The third theme I want to analyse is the Boses' involvement in and views about the Hindu-Muslim problem in Bengal and in India. C.R. Das realised in the early 1920's that since the Muslims constituted a majority of the population of Bengal, a political leader in Bengal must have significant Muslim support to fight against the Raj in the legislative council and elsewhere. So Das entered the Bengal Pact which was welcomed by many Muslims as a demonstration of Hindu good faith. But, at the same time, Das was subjected to considerable criticism from the



Hindu side. The Pact was never accepted by the national Congress and by 1926, the year after Das's death, it had fallen by the wayside.<sup>48</sup> The two succeeding decades were marked by considerable communal antagonism, but also by some efforts at communal rapprochement in which the Boses often played a vital role.

One barrier to communal peace in the 1930's, at least as far as the Hindus were concerned, was the Communal Award, which gave the Muslims a predominant place in the Bengal Legislative Assembly. Of the 250 seats, the Muslims, 54% of the population, had 119 seats reserved for them, while the Hindu or general constituencies numbered 80, of which, by the Poona Pact, 30 were to be reserved for scheduled caste members. Many objected to this legislation of a near majority for the Muslims, including all sections of the Hindu community and even some British officials and politicians.<sup>49</sup>

Although the Congress objected to the Communal Award, its major concern was the quest for independence and its rejection in principle of the whole Government of India Act of 1935. In Bengal, Hindu feeling was more intense against the Communal Award. A Nationalist Party comprising some Congressmen and others sprang up which opposed the weak Congress stand on the Communal Award. Those toeing the Congress line suffered defeat in a number of constituencies in elections to the Central Legislative Assembly in 1934. Sarat Bose, though detained under house arrest in Kurseong, was elected unopposed from a Calcutta seat with both Nationalists and regular Congressmen claiming his support.<sup>50</sup>

The 1934 defeats resulted in the Bengal Congress, whose election board was headed by Sarat Bose in 1936, taking a stronger and more direct stand against the Communal Award than national Congress policy allowed. A controversy ensued with Jawaharlal Nehru accusing the Bengalis of thinking too much in communal terms and of converting the Bengal Congress into the Nationalist Party.<sup>51</sup> Sarat Bose responded vigorously insisting that the Bengal Congressmen never lost sight of the main issue of gaining independence, but that they



wanted an unequivocal position taken on the Communal Award. He wrote to Nehru on October 9, 1936 : "The fact is that the Nationalist Party in Bengal has become merged into the Congress and not that the Nationalist Party has swallowed the Congress in Bengal."<sup>52</sup> This controversy and the intensity of Bengal Hindu feeling against the Communal Award hindered efforts at communal rapprochement.

Nevertheless, after the elections under the new Act, some Bengal Congressmen wanted to form a coalition ministry with Fazlul Huq, who was also interested in such an arrangement. Efforts at such a coalition between 1937 and 1941, were prevented by the Gandhian High Command. This was due in part to the lack of strength which Bengal Congressmen had in the central organization even when Subhas Bose was president of the national Congress. As president, Bose represented the Congress in fruitless negotiations and correspondence with Jinnah in the course of which the latter demanded that the Muslim League be recognized as the sole organization representing all the Muslims in India. Although this was not an accurate estimation of the League's position at that time, Bose and other Congress leaders including Nehru, Prasad, and Gandhi underestimated the potentialities of the League and of Mr. Jinnah.<sup>53</sup>

Though the opportunity was missed for a coalition with Fazlul Huq in 1937, secret negotiations continued through the following years between League, Congress, and Krishak Praja Party leaders about the possibilities of coalition. The Bose group made a temporary alliance with the League in Calcutta Corporation in 1939, but the most important coalition could not be made. Both brothers were interested in such an alliance, but Sarat Bose, as leader of the Congress group and of the opposition in the Bengal Legislative Assembly was more vital to these negotiations.<sup>54</sup>

The alliance with Fazlul Huq and the ejection of the Muslim League from the Bengal Cabinet was finally accomplished by Sarat Bose in December 1941.<sup>55</sup> But viewing with horror the possibility that Sarat Bose would become Home Minister



in such a government, the Government of India in collaboration with the Government of Bengal arrested Sarat Bose just before the new cabinet was formed. The charges included that Sarat Bose had held secret meetings with Japanese representatives in Calcutta and that he presented a danger to internal security. The prisoner was held, however, without trial for the duration of the war. Lord Linlithgow wrote to the Secretary of the State, Mr. Amery, shortly after Sarat Bose's arrest :

It is obvious that it was well to have got Sarat Bose away from here, for from what I gather the restriction on his interviews were of the lightest, and in fact one individual went so far as to suggest that it was almost the case that Cabinet meetings were held in his quarters in the jail ! That is not satisfactory, and though I realise the difficulties of local officials in debiting interviews with the Chief Minister and company against Sarat Bose's quota, I see myself no reason why he should not have been subject to precisely the same degree of restriction as the ordinary prisoner of his class, while his contacts with the Japanese were an additional reason for exercising the greatest care in his case <sup>66</sup>

The new ministry was formed, nevertheless, but Shyama Prasad Mookherjee became the most important Hindu member instead of Sarat Bose. This gravely weakened the ministry because the Muslim members had much less confidence in Shyama Prasad and the latter was not as firmly committed to the ministry and to Hindu-Muslim alliance as Sarat Bose.<sup>67</sup> The Government, however, was more interested in potential threats to security than in the firmness of Hindu-Muslim alliance. I believe that the Governments of India and Bengal and the Gandhians acted with considerable shortsightedness in the matter of a Hindu-Muslim cabinet in Bengal and the Boses acted with more wisdom.

The Boses participated in two more very important efforts at communal harmony and alliance : the Indian National Army and the movement for a United Bengal. I leave others to tell of the serious efforts that Subhas Bose made as commander-in-chief of the I.N.A. to bring unity and cooperation between recruits of the different communities and regions of



India. He was, I think, successful, on the whole with this experiment.

After Sarat Bose was released from prison in 1945, he bent all efforts on preventing the partition of Bengal and of India. Sarat Bose was the most important Hindu leader in Bengal who opposed the partition in early 1947, when both Congress and Hindu Mahasabha were demanding the partition of Bengal.<sup>68</sup> From Sarat Bose's point of view every effort had to be made to prevent the division of Bengal on a religious basis.<sup>69</sup> But it was, for better or for worse, too late. The Hindus of Bengal would not rally behind Sarat Bose and the division came. Gandhi replied to Nirmal Bose's question about why he did not continue to struggle against the partition to the bitter end :

With whom was I going to carry on the fight ? Don't you realise that, as a result of one year of communal riots, the people of India have all become communal ? They can see nothing beyond the communal question. They are tired and frightened. The Congress has only represented this feeling of the whole nation. How can I oppose it ?<sup>70</sup>

Sarat Bose did continue to struggle. But the forces for partition were overwhelming. After the partition, Sarat Bose continued in politics as a critic of the Congress, pressing his former party to move more rapidly to meet the needs of the Indian people.



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  51. A.I.C.C. Papers, Nehru Memorial Library, File G24 (i), 1936, Communal Award, General Correspondence by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.
  52. A.I.C.C. Papers, File G24 (i), 1936.
  53. See Gordon, *Bengal*, Chap. IX ; "Re : Hindu-Muslim Settlement, Correspondence between Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Jinnah, Pandit Jawaharlal and Mr. Jinnah and S. Bose and Mr. Jinnah" (Delhi, n.d., 1938).
  54. Interviews with Surendra Mohan Ghose, New Delhi, 1965, 1972 ; Mr. Ghose was personally involved in these negotiations ; interviews with Nirad C. Chaudhuri, Delhi, 1965 ; Mr. Chaudhuri was Sarat Bose's private secretary during this period ; there are also references in Government of India, Bengal Governor's Reports, 1937-41.
  55. *Statesman*, December 1941, gives a day-by-day account of the formation of the Progressive Coalition ; Mitra, *Register*, 1941, II, 143-51 ; Reginald Coupland, *The Constitutional Problem in India* (London, 1945), Part II, 29-31 ; Government of India, Home Department, Political, File 232/1941, Ministerial Crisis in Bengal.
  56. Government of India, Public and Judicial, File 7542/1945, Extract from Private and Personal letter from Lord Linlithgow to Mr. Amery, December 30, 1941.
  57. Government of India, Home Department, Political, File 33/45/1942, gives the statements Shyama Prasad Mookerjee gave upon resigning and subsequently ; interview with Abul Mansur Ahmed, Dacca, June 1972, who was an important Muslim leader in this period.
  58. A.I.C.C. Papers, Files CL-8, CL-14C, CL-14D, CL-21, Bengal Partition Papers 1946-47 ; Sarat Bose, *I Warned My Countrymen*, passim ; Mitra, *Register*, 1947, I, 238ff.
  59. Sarat Bose, *I Warned My Countrymen*, 211ff ; interview with Abul Hashim, Dacca, June 1972 ; Mr. Hashim was one of the Muslim leaders of the United Bengal movement.
  60. N. K. Bose, *Lectures on Gandhism* (Ahmedabad, 1971), P. 111.



## Discussion

*Mr. Gautam Chattopadhyaya* : I have two points to make in regard to Dr. Gordon's paper.

First, he has repeatedly referred to what he calls the 'ambivalent' attitude of Subhas Chandra Bose towards the British, characterised by the so-called 'good boy' attitude and the 'mischief maker' attitude. I do not think there was any ambivalence in Bose's attitude to the British or that of any other leading anti-imperialist of that period. It was in fact a mutually complementary attitude. Subhas Chandra Bose, like any other militant anti-imperialist of the period of the early twenties or thirties of this century, was totally against British Imperialism. This brought out in him and others the antagonistic attitude towards the British. On the other hand, as a rational nationalist, he felt that the West had overtaken us by some decades and therefore we had much to learn from the West including England. Thus, there was nothing wrong or 'ambivalent' in their admiration for the strength and the good traits of Western nations including the British. This attitude of being both pro-British and anti-British was not ambivalent but was a very correct attitude of a modern democratic anti-imperialist nationalist.

Secondly, in regard to Bengal-Centre differences—the Bose-Gandhi differences—Dr. Gordon said that violence and non-violence, the question of means, played the cardinal role. While I do not deny that the question of violence and non-violence was a factor, I submit that this was not the cardinal factor. The cardinal factor, as all historical evidence reveals, was that Bose, Bengal revolutionaries and non-Bengali left-wingers stood for complete independence of India as the goal of our national movement ; whereas the then moderates or the right-wingers, if you wish to characterise them as such, including the revered Gandhiji stood for Dominion Status. It was here in Calcutta, not very far from this place, that the great clash took place in 1928, not over the question of violence or non-violence but over the question of complete independence versus Dominion Status. While Gandhiji wanted to give the British one year's time and Dominion Status declared to be our aim, Subhas Chandra Bose, Bengal revolutionaries and non-Bengali left-wingers demanded that complete independence should be our national objective, that no time should be given to the British and that we should strike at once. And, as Subhas Chandra Bose wrote later in 'The Indian Struggle,' to give the enemy time was to allow him to get prepared and strike us at his will and to deny ourselves the strategic initiative. I think that was the crucial difference. I think further that on this issue Subhas Chandra Bose was correct both on the programmatic as well as on the tactical plane.



## THE BENGAL STUDENT AS I KNEW HIM 1909-1916\*

EDWARD FARLEY OATEN\*\*

*Walton-on-Thames, England*

At 88 I am semi-blind and have to use an amanuensis. I cannot refer to records, but I believe the facts in this essay are correct.

I first joined the Presidency College in October 1909 during Lord Minto's Viceroyalty. The College was Government owned and staffed, which fact had advantages and disadvantages. I met with one of the disadvantages in the third decade when I was working as director of Public Instruction with an Indian Minister of Education under the dyarchical system brought about by the Montagu Chelmsford reforms of 1918. The Minister one day sent for me and said he wanted a third class matriculate admitted to the Presidency College. I replied that the College had already refused him on the grounds that he did not meet their high standard for admission. The Minister persisted, and eventually I said if he would give me an order in writing to this effect I would pass it on to the Principal. He did so and the boy was duly admitted. The Minister then sent for me and explained why he had so insisted, and that the uncle of the boy was a supporter of his party in the Bengal House of Legislature, and had threatened to cross the floor of the House if his nephew was not admitted and so put him in a minority. The Minister added "You know I have a majority only of one. You English invented this damned system of Government and you must help me work it."

So was exemplified one of the disadvantages of Presidency College being a Government College.

Another result which stemmed from the same fact was the division of the staff into provincial and imperial Government servants. Whether this was a disadvantage depends on one's point of view. The provincial members of the staff were mainly

\* Paper presented at Netaji Bhawan, Calcutta, on 23rd January 1973  
Chairman : Dr. R. C. Majumdar

\*\* Since deceased



Bengalis : the imperial members were mainly British—the latter constituting the Indian Educational Service. It was by recruitment into the I.E.S. that I became a member of the staff of Presidency College in 1909, at the same time as three or four other new recruits from Britain, all fairly young men. We were not eminent or established scholars : such men could have been obtained only for short periods and on a much higher salary. Mr. H. R. James the Principal established the system by which the newly appointed member of the I. E. S. became Head of his Department however great the eminence of his provincial colleague. This seemed to me to be unfair. There was a good deal of criticism of this system in the local press, and in the third decade when I was D. P. I. Mr. J. M. Sen Gupta at that time leader of the Swaraj Party in the Bengal Legislature, thundered out a speech in the House in which he called us third class men from third class universities. Over a drink in the Calcutta Club later I said to him “Sen Gupta, you were hard on our Service today”: “Oh my dear fellow, don’t take any notice” he answered, “I have to say these things”. Sengupta was a Cambridge man and despised the Provincial Universities like Liverpool and Aberdeen from which two of our members came. In actual fact we all had very good degrees though not all from Oxford and Cambridge. I myself had a 1st class Cambridge Honours degree.

Before I left England I had been given no instruction and very little advice as to what conditions I might meet in the Presidency College. I was agreeably surprised to find that in general the students were delightful people to teach. I realised of course that the system by which India was ruled from England was being increasingly questioned as a result of the Indian National Congress activities. I had come out to India with the feeling that within a measurable space of time the system would change or cease. I felt that I was probably teaching either the future rulers of Bengal or at least the fathers of the future rulers, and I felt it to be rather a responsibility. From the eager faces which greeted me daily in the lecture room I could deduce nothing as to what was passing through their



minds politically speaking. They were courteous and friendly to us Englishmen or Scotsmen. They had a good knowledge of English since Presidency College obtained the best of the available talent. They appeared happy to have British professors on the staff and seemed pleased when they had an opportunity of speaking to them as they often did. In my historical seminar the senior students wrote excellent papers and joined in the discussion of them afterwards. When a College magazine was started they contributed interesting and readable articles. I was thoroughly happy during my early years in Presidency College and much enjoyed myself. With some of the students I had real intellectual discussions. The visit of King George and Queen Mary in 1911 and the outbreak of the 1st Great War in 1914 produced many expressions of loyalty. One historic episode was the visit by the soldiers of the 10th. Middlesex Regiment in 1915 to the College where they were entertained by staff and students and saw all aspects of the work of the college. The sight of khaki clad soldiers invading the laboratories and seminars, being thoroughly interested in the work done there was astonishing until it was realised that the Regiment which had recently reached Fort William from England consisted entirely of teachers from the Training College. They stayed in the College until it was dark and some were taken to see the stars from the Observatory. The visit did much good to both students and soldiers alike.

Among other sports there was a cricket and a football team, and the students took pride in winning the Elliott shield and other trophies. I myself played cricket with the team and had an opportunity in training them in the ethics of the game. Once when we were playing (against a White Calcutta team I think) a bowler on our side stopped in his run and ran out a man of the Calcutta side who was backing up too vigorously. This is not normally done unless one has warned the player first. On another occasion our Captain, Kanu Roy, was not present when the time came for us to field and a substitute had to be used. Roy later appeared and said he had been playing for two teams on that day and as he made 100 in the other



game he was away longer than he expected. As Vice President of the Club I suspended him for a fortnight to teach him the elementary decencies of the game. Next day one of my students respectfully said to me that I was playing under his authority as Captain I should have waited until the end of the game before suspending him. I replied that he would obviously make a good lawyer in due course !

The students exhibited their characters in some of examination papers. One student wrote "Oh God, Of God, Of God!" and sent that up to the examiner. He was the despairing sort. Another wrote at the end of his quite sensible paper "To err is human, to forgive divine (Pope)." He was the hopeful type. One student came pleading for help, had failed his B.A. and wanted advice. I asked him how many times he had failed. He said "Thrice Sir." I said "Why bother to go on ?" He replied "Sir I have every confidence in chance". He was the happy go lucky type. An answer which got no marks was reported to me by a colleague who asked his pupils to comment on the phrase "I smell a rat, I see it floating in the air. Let us nip it in the bud". A pupil produced this gem, "Rat should be mouse for if you nip anything in the bud it is small." Such answer cover only a small section of the students. Most were serious and hard working and had no necessity to resort to such answers.

The College had no houses attached to it so the staff lived in what houses they could find. This meant that the I.E.S. men lived in the European quarters and so the opportunities for social intercourse with students were limited. I had a chance of conversing with them on the cricket field and from time to time one shared sherbet and sandesh by invitation of the students at the Eden Hindu Hostel where one was expected after refreshment to make some speech on one's subject. On one occasion I attended the wedding of one of my pupils. I also corresponded in Bengali with one student and was delighted to find recently that he had kept my letter for fifty years. In Mofussil College very often houses were available near the college and one could meet students more easily. Presidency College was unfortunate in this respect.



As stated politics seemed to enter the College very little in the early days but about 1915 things seemed to change somewhat. Discipline became slack and an essential rule of the college that students must not go along the corridors until the bell rang for the end of a lecture was disregarded. This rule was necessary because owing to the heat one had to lecture with open doors and movement along the corridor drowned one's voice and led to the premature end of the lecture. After enduring such disturbance on frequent occasions I at last went into the corridor, spread my arms out in the face of an approaching body of students and said "Go back, you know you are not allowed along the corridor until the bell rings." The students retired. I wanted solely to complete my lecture in peace. A little later there was another incident, the details of which escape my mind after fifty years. However Dr. Irene Gilbert<sup>1</sup> of U.S.A. the Historian of the I.E S. who has been able to peruse the Government records of that time has told me that it is recorded that a student was shouting on the corridor and that I escorted him to the office and had him fined one rupee for disturbing my lecture. The student reported the incident with the exaggeration that I used force.

Such exaggerations were reported commonly in the local press presumably contributed by a disgruntled student. I remember Professor Coyajee and myself calling on Surendra Nath Banerjea (later Sir) Editor of the Bengalee with the request that he would not exaggerate some incident which happened in the College. He received us courteously and allowed us to blue pencil out any statements with which we disagreed. The amended article appeared next day but side by side was another article which contained all the exaggerations which had been omitted, so our labour was unavailing.

The classic example of such exaggeration occurred over an incident in the Scottish Church's College when the students went on strike and lay down in a body in the college grounds.

<sup>1</sup> Gilbert, Irene, "Autonomy and Consensus under the Raj : Presidency (Calcutta) ; Muir (Allahabad), M.A.O. (Aligarh)", Education and Politics in India, Rudolph, Lloyd. I., and Rudolph, Suzanne. H., eds. Harvard University Press, 1972.



The inoffensive Scottish Missionary Professors in approaching the college to enter were described in the local press as having kicked and trampled on the students.

As I have entirely forgotten the second incident in the Presidency College I am unable to say much about it, but I do remember denying something in the inquiry, but, as some of the students resented my actions, I regret that I did not adopt some other course. Mr. Toye in his "The Springing Tiger" states "At length a chance word caused the Englishman to lose his temper, and he laid his hands on one of the students". These words could mean anything that the reader likes to read into them. It seems that I led the student to the office, but to do so violently would have been contrary to my nature. I was merely enforcing discipline.

Next day I was assaulted from the rear by a body of students while posting up a cricket notice. Subhas Chandra Bose was supposed to have been connected with the affair, although I never had any proof of this. I suffered no injury except for a few bruises and I bore the assailants no malice and refused to prosecute. The College was closed by the Government owing to the assault, and a Committee of inquiry was appointed into the discipline of the College.<sup>1</sup> Subhas C. Bose was expelled. In reality, although it did not appear so at the time I owe a debt of gratitude to the assailants, I.E.S. men were strictly forbidden to apply for a commission in the Army. However, after resuming my work as a teacher in July 1916, and finding my pupils very pleasant, I was offered in September a chance of a commission in the King Edward's Own Lancers (Probyn's Horse), and the result was that I had 2½ interesting years commanding Sikhs, Dogras and Moslems (including Pathans) ending with the rank of Captain on the North West Frontier of India. This was due to the fact that the Government of India thought that a change for me would be beneficial, and this meant, as a result I was able to serve my country as a soldier in the 1st Great War. I had a good send off from my histori-

<sup>1</sup>See Appendix 2 for text of Government Statement and Report of Enquiry Committee. Ed.



cal seminar and a photograph was taken, of which a copy was sent to me recently by one of my former pupils.

When I became D.P.I. in 1924 the assault had been almost forgotten, but, owing to Netaji's historic subsequent career, the incident has been revived and various accounts have been written.

I have been privileged in a long life to see India obtain her freedom in 1947 and celebrate the Silver Jubilee in 1972. Netaji contributed towards the obtaining of that freedom, although not everybody approved of his methods. I do not regret the fact that in the beginning of his career my name was linked with his. We both of us each in his own way helped to make modern India.



## Discussion

*Mr. Amiya Nath Bose :* The information that I shall be giving you about the Oaten incident was given to me by Netaji himself.

The incident came up in this way. One evening Netaji expressed his annoyance at the way my father the late Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose generously tolerated and gave importance to a certain gentleman in public life. Netaji told me that he could never forgive that gentleman because of certain things that he had known about him during his student days. To satisfy my curiosity, Netaji related the following about the second Oaten incident :

According to Netaji, Mr. Oaten used to condemn everything Indian in his lectures and he was contemptuous of Indian culture and history. A feeling of animosity thus grew up between him and his Indian students. Students held many meetings amongst themselves to decide what was to be done about it. Protests registered in the classes were not of any avail. The direct reason for the second incident was this : In one of Mr. Oaten's classes, one of the students may have talked. Mr. Oaten felt very annoyed, walked up the student and boxed his ears. The gentleman who had his ears boxed is alive and available. After this incident a number of students including Subhas Chandra Bose met and decided that Mr. Oaten should be thrashed for his violence on the students. And the assault was neither accidental nor sudden.

I asked Netaji many many times whether he had himself physically assaulted Mr. Oaten. He never answered the question. He only smiled.

As to the events following the assault, Netaji said that the same evening an Indian student supplied a list of students involved in the incident to Mr. Oaten. That list included the name of Subhas Chandra Bose, among others. The gentleman whom my father was treating generously was the student who secretly informed Mr. Oaten about the students responsible for assaulting him.

*Mr. Gautam Chattopadhyaya :* I shall report on two points in regard to Professor Oaten's paper.

First, I shall report the version of the incident that I have heard repeatedly from my father the late Professor Kshitish Prosad Chattopadhyaya who was all his life an intimate friend of Subhas Chandra Bose and studied with him both at the Presidency College and at Cambridge. The version substantially tallies with what Mr. Amiya Nath Bose has just told us, with only one slight difference, while it does not tally with what Professor Oaten has presented to us in his paper. My father told us that Indian students were very angry because of the continuous anti-Indian utterances of Mr. Oaten and his derogatory remarks about India's struggle for freedom, Indian culture and so on. And the students decided that he should be



taught a lesson. But as to Subhas Chandra Bose's role in it, my father used to put it like this : although Subhas Chandra Bose would never have hesitated to take any risks including the beating up of Mr. Oaten, knowing him all his life my father would not believe that Subhas participated in that thrashing because it was against the grain of Subhas Chandra Bose to hit a man from behind. If Subhas would have hit Oaten, he would have done so from the front. But, because Subhas was a party to the whole plan, he owned it up when the punishment came and he would not budge an inch.

The second point that I want to make is in regard to the oblique and implied but very clear reference to the Oaten incident by Poet Rabindra Nath Tagore. Tagore was not a political person. But as he himself used to say, he was not unaffected by the storms and stresses of Indian political life. In one of his weekly speeches to his students in *Shantiniketan* immediately after the Oaten incident (published during the Tagore centenary), Tagore said that no crime was so heinous as that of hitting one's teacher. From that standpoint, he was of course against any insult to one's teacher, let alone laying hands on him. But, if a teacher committed the sacrilege of insulting Mother India, the student had every right to consider it to be his greater duty to be loyal to his motherland and take any action that he thought fit against the teacher in question.

*Mr. Sisir K. Bose* : Let us not forget that Netaji himself has written in fair detail about the two incidents in his unfinished autobiography 'An Indian Pilgrim'<sup>1</sup>.

He has frankly admitted having been an eye-witness to the assault on Professor Oaten. And it is clear that the Professor's present account does not tally in certain important respects with Netaji's description recorded in 1937. Neither do the statements made here by Mr. Amiya Nath Bose and Mr. Gautam Chattopadhyaya conform in all respects to Netaji's written account. By re-reading Netaji's record carefully and between the lines, we shall be able to judge where Professor Oaten and others have gone wrong.

The larger and perhaps the more fundamental question thrown up by the paper is the story of Indo-British relations of the second decade. After all, the Oaten episode was only a symptom and an expression of the developing contradiction between the then existing imperialist educational system and the rise of nationalism among the Indian youth. The contradiction eventually culminated, in the beginning of the third decade, in the boycott of educational institutions run under imperialist auspices, as part of the great Non-cooperation Movement.

<sup>1</sup>See Appendix 1 for relevant passages from 'An Indian Pilgrim'. Ed.



## APPENDIX I

## THE OATEN INCIDENT

*As narrated by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in "An Indian Pilgrim", his unfinished autobiography.*

One morning in January, 1916, when I was in the College library I heard that a certain English Professor had malhandled some students belonging to our year. On enquiry it appeared that some of our classmates were walking along the corridor adjoining Mr. O.'s lecture-room when Mr. O., feeling annoyed at the disturbance, rushed out of the room and violently pushed back a number of students who were in the front row. We had a system of class-representatives whom the Principal<sup>1</sup> consulted on general matters and I was the representative of my class. I immediately took the matter up with the Principal and suggested among other things that Mr. O. should apologise to the students whom he had insulted. The Principal said that since Mr. O. was a member of the Indian Educational Service, he could not coerce him into doing that. He said further that Mr. O. had not malhandled any students or used force against them—but had simply 'taken them by the arm' which did not amount to an insult. We were naturally not satisfied and the next day there was a general strike of all the students. The Principal resorted to all sorts of coercive and diplomatic measures in order to break the strike, but to no avail. Even the Moulvi Sahib's efforts to wean away the Muslim Students ended in failure. Likewise the appeals of popular professors like Sir P. C. Ray and Dr. D. N. Mullick fell flat. Among other disciplinary measures, the Principal levied a general fine on all the absentee students.

A successful strike in the Presidency College was a source of great excitement throughout the city. The strike contagion began to spread, and the authorities began to get nervous. One of my professors who was rather fond of me was afraid that I would land myself in trouble being one of the strike-leaders. He took me aside and quietly asked me if I realised what I was in for. I said that I was—whereupon he said that he would say nothing more. However, at the end of the second day's strike, pressure was brought to bear on Mr. O. He sent for the students' representatives and settled the dispute amicably with them, a formula honourable to both parties having been devised in the meantime.

The next day the lectures were held and the students assembled in an atmosphere of 'forgive and forget'. It was naturally expected that after

<sup>1</sup>Mr H. R. J. (deceased)



the settlement the Principal would withdraw the penal measures he had adopted during the strike, but they were disappointed. He would not budge an inch—the fine would have to be paid unless a student pleaded poverty. All appeals made by the students as well as by the professors proved to be unavailing. The fine rankled in the minds of the students, but nothing could be done.

About a month later a similar incident came like a bolt from the blue. The report went out that Mr. O had again malhandled a student—but this time it was a student of the first year. What were the students to do? Constitutional protests like strikes would simply provoke disciplinary measures and appeals to the Principal would be futile. Some students therefore decided to take the law into their own hands. The result was that Mr. O. was subjected to the argument of force and in the process was beaten black and blue. From the newspaper office to Government House everywhere there was wild commotion.

It was alleged at the time that the students had attacked Mr. O. from behind and thrown him down the stairs. This allegation is entirely false. Mr. O. did receive one solitary stroke from behind, but that was of no account. His assailants—those who felled him—were all in front of him and on the same level with him. Being an eye witness myself I can assert this without fear of contradiction. It is necessary that this point should be made clear in fairness to the students.



## APPENDIX 2

**DISCIPLINE IN PRESIDENCY COLLEGE\****(a) Government Statement.**(b) Report of the Enquiry Committee.*

(a) 1. A committee, consisting of the Hon'ble Justice Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee, K T., C.S.I., D.L., the Hon'ble Mr. W. W. Hornwell, M.A., Director of Public Instruction, Bengal, Mr. C. W. Peake, Professor, Presidency College, the Revd. J. Mitchell, M.A., F.R.A.S., Principal, Wesleyan College, Bankura and Mr. Herambachandra Maitra, M.A., Principal, City College, was appointed by this Government in Resolution No. 416, dated the 20th February 1916, and letter No. 422, dated the 21st February 1916 to enquire into the general state of discipline at Presidency College, Calcutta, with special reference to a strike which took place on the 10th January 1916 and to an attack upon Professor Oaten which occurred on the 15th February 1916. The report of the Committee has now been received by Government and is published for general information. The Governor in council desires to tender his thanks to the members of the Committee for their labours, for the care with which they have made the enquiry entrusted to them and for their conclusions and recommendations, which will receive all the consideration which is due to the authority with which they have been made.

2. The Committee have described in detail the two incidents particularly referred to above and the antecedent circumstances which led up to them. With regard to the strike which occurred in January, they are of opinion that it is clearly established that some at any rate of the students' consultative committee entirely failed in their duty, and that so far from assisting the Principal, some members rendered the task of the Principal more difficult by deliberate misrepresentations of his attitude. In respect of the assault on Mr. Oaten, the Committee are impressed with the gravity of the offence committed by those who organised and carried it out and consider that they should be severely punished. As to the light thrown by these incidents upon the general question of discipline in the College, the view taken is that "it would be unjust, to base on these two incidents alone a sweeping condemnation of the entire College, or to conclude that there had been any lack of strenuous and successful effort on the part of the Principal and the staff to maintain discipline in the institution". The Committee consider that on the other hand, "the true reasons for the present

\*Reproduced from the 'Bengalee'.



condition of things must be sought for in other directions". They come finally to the conclusion in which the Governor in Council concurs, that no further disciplinary action of a general nature is required, and that the Governing Body may be left to deal with any individuals who may have been concerned with the assault on Professor Oaten, and also with those members of the Students' Consultative Committee who were implicated in the strike.

3. The Committee have made a careful examination of the general state of discipline at Presidency College. They find that recently there has been some ferment among the students as a body, due, in the main, to political causes, which has resulted in the spread among them of a spirit of insubordination and the existence of what is described as "a spirit of excessive touchiness". The Committee note that there is a tendency among these young men to insist upon what they considered to be their rights without a full realisation of their accompanying responsibilities. These unfortunate conditions are attributed in part to the activities of dangerous revolutionary propagandists, and to the baneful influence of injudicious discussion in the public press of breaches of discipline. They are also in the opinion of the Committee due in part to the irritation caused by the division of the members of the College and between the Indian and the Provincial Educational Services, and to the want of free intercourse between the European Professors and the students, which has led, on four specified occasions in the past four years, to the exhibition of want of tact on the part of the teachers and to an undue sensitiveness on the part of their pupils. The Governor in Council believes that the Committee have accurately summarized the disturbing influences which have been at work, and desires to express his general concurrence in their findings.

4. The Committee then proceed to make 12 recommendations, each of which has been carefully considered by the Governor in Council. In the first place, he accepts the suggestion that the Governing Body of Presidency College should be reconstituted so as to make it more representative and bring it into closer touch both with Government and with the public. Immediate action will be taken to give effect to this recommendation. The Governor in Council further accepts the views expressed by the Committee as to the departmental system in the College, and also with regard to the desirability of reconstituting the Consultative Committee of Students on a basis other than the system of election, which has clearly proved a failure. These views will now be brought to the notice of the Principal and the Governing Body.

5. In their fifth recommendation the Committee deal with the relations between members of the Indian Educational Service and of the Provincial Educational Service and suggest that members of the teaching staff should be appointed not to Services but to posts on an incremental



salary. The whole question of the future constitution of the Indian Educational Service and the Provincial Educational Service was discussed very thoroughly before the Public Services Commission, and now awaits the orders to be passed on its report. It will be impossible, therefore, to take any further action in the matter, until the recommendations of the Commission have been dealt with. The Governor in Council is in full sympathy with the views of the Committee that, in order to promote intercourse and foster a better understanding between the European Professors and the students, the former should possess a competent knowledge of the vernacular and be encouraged to learn a classical Indian language. The Committee's recommendation on this subject will be considered in consultation with the Director of Public Instruction, and after reference to the existing rules governing language examinations. The Committee further advise that the Principal should take an active part in the instruction of the students, and thus come into more direct contact with them. Orders have already been received from the Government of India sanctioning the appointment of two professors of the College as Bursar and Dean respectively, and the Governor in Council hope that in view of the relief which will thus be afforded to the Principal, he may be able to carry out the recommendation made by the Committee. Action will therefore be taken at an early date in furtherance of this proposal of the Committee. The Governor in Council is not prepared to accept without some qualification the suggestion that professors of note should be transferred from the other colleges to the staff of Presidency College. He appreciates, however, the value of the recommendation that graduates of special distinction, with some experience in teaching, should alone be appointed to Presidency College, and suitable action will be taken to give effect to it. The proposals for structural alterations designed to minimise the likelihood of disturbance in the corridors will be referred to the Principal for examination, in direct communication with the Superintending Engineer, with instructions to submit their joint proposals to the Governing Body before they are sent up to Government.

6. The Committee refer in the following terms to the question of discussion in the Press of breaches of discipline in educational institutions :—

"It is essential that a definite pronouncement should be made by Government as to the incalculable mischief likely to result from the injudicious discussion in the Public Press of questions relating to breaches of discipline in educational institutions. At the same time we recognise that the most effective remedy for the situation would be the creation of an 'esprit-de-corps' which would render impossible the ventilation of grievances in the public Press". The Governor in Council emphatically endorses these views, to which he desires to draw the attention of all the Editors of newspapers in Bengal. He trusts that they will recognise the grave in-



jury which may be caused to the student community by the public discussion of the grievances of youths who are still "in statu pupillari".

7. The question of the management of the Eden Hindu Hostel, with which the Committee deal in the recommendation will be taken up at once in consultation with the Principal and the Governing Body. The Governor in Council will also take into consideration in communication with the Director of Public Instruction and the Vice-Chancellor and Syndicate of the University, the general recommendations made by the Committee on the subjects of hostels.

8. The Committee refer finally to the undesirable character of the present surroundings of Presidency College. Proposals for the removal of the College to a more suitable situation were considered with much care and from all points of view some ten years back, when it was deliberately decided to retain Presidency College on its present site and elaborate plans were prepared for its future expansion. In accordance with these plans, a considerable area of land has since been acquired and the Baker Laboratories have been built at a large cost. The Governor in Council will, however, examine the papers connected with the previous proposals in the light of the present recommendations of the Committee.

### *(b) Report of the Committee*

We, the Committee appointed to enquire into the general conditions of discipline at the Presidency College with special reference to the strike which occurred in January last and the recent attack upon Professor Oaten, have the honour to submit our report and to make recommendations.

The first of the two incidents mentioned took place on the 10th January last. On that date, prizes were distributed to the students of the Hindu and Hare Schools by His Excellency the Governor of Bengal. Some of the Professors of the Presidency College as also some of the students who were ex-students of these schools were invited to the function. The result was that some of the Classes in the College were not held at the appointed hour. There was, besides, one Professor who was late and did not take his class in time. Many of the students of the 3rd Year Class appeared in these circumstances to have been present in one of the corridors contrary to the rule prescribed by the College authorities in this behalf. The particular rule (which appears in a book of instructions supplied to each student) may be set out here in full :—

"To guard against disturbances to classes while lectures are going on, it is a rule of the College that students must not enter the corridors outside the lecture-rooms on the first and second storeys of the College building until the hour for the lectures they have to attend



has struck. No student, therefore, should be in the corridors between the sounding of the second gong for lectures and the next hour ; nor may students enter unoccupied lecture-rooms, except in accordance with the first part of this rule."

Mr. Oaten was at the time lecturing in one of the rooms adjoining the corridors and felt himself seriously disturbed by the noise outside ; he accordingly asked the students several times to go back to their class-rooms. They did so, but, later on, in the course of the same hour, the Professor in charge of the class called the rolls and dismissed the students. The boys then left the class-room and came into the corridor again with the professor amongst them. Mr. Oaten was disturbed, came out of his lecture-room, ordered the students back to their class-rooms and pushed some of them. The evidence also shows that he stopped the professor, but the latter established his identity and was allowed to pass through. It is neither necessary for our present purpose nor possible on the evidence to determine with accuracy the exact amount of force used by Mr. Oaten, but the fact remains that the students whose bodies had been "touched" by Mr. Oaten with "an impulsive gesture", as he says, felt aggrieved and lodged a complaint with the Principal. One of the students was Subhas Chandra Bose, the representative of the class on the Students' Consultative Committee. Here it may be observed in passing that the rule in question does not appear to have been always strictly enforced by every professor of the College, especially when classes were dismissed before the prescribed hour. This is not a matter of surprise when we remember that as many as 80 lectures are delivered in the College in the course of a single day. It should be noted, besides, that on both the occasions which have been brought to our notice the presence of students in the corridor was due to exceptional circumstances. To continue the narrative the Principal asked the students to see Mr. Oaten and advised them to make up the difference with him. This apparently dissatisfied them and the impression rapidly got abroad amongst them that Mr. James lacked sympathy with them and was reluctant to listen to their complaint against Mr. Oaten. This, as we shall presently see, was entirely unfounded and aggrieved students wholly misjudged the real attitude of Mr. James towards them. It now transpires that while on the one hand Mr. James referred the students to Mr. Oaten, on the other hand he privately wrote to Mr. Oaten and hinted that it would be the wise and gentlemanly thing to make it up with the students. Mr. Oaten has not preserved the original letter but this is the impression we gather from his statement as to its contents. The next day Mr. Oaten could not come to the College as he was on guard duty at Government House. On that day no classes could be held as the students went on strike. It is plain from the evidence that the leading part in this discreditable strike was taken by a few students while of the large majority who



kept away from the classes, some did so on account of fear of personal violence and others owing to a lack of moral courage to face the ridicule of their fellow-students. Some of the professors, both European and Indian, intervened but not very successfully to bring the students round and induce them to attend their classes. We desire to invite special attention here to the fact that in the organisation of this strike a very prominent part was taken by some at least of the Members of the Students Consultative Committee ; while some failed to assist their Principal to uphold law and order on the occasion of this trouble, others actually spread an unfounded rumour that the Principal had no sympathy for them and thus helped in a large measure to foster discontent and to develop the strike. In the course of the day, a notice was posted by the Principal to the effect that a fine of Rs. 5/- would be imposed upon every student of the college who kept away from his class. This order was issued in accordance with one of the College rules, which may be quoted here 'in extenso' :—

“Whenever the students of a class are all found to be absent, unless such absence can be shown to have been accidental and due to misunderstanding every student of the class will incur fine of Rs. 5/-. Should such absence be repeated a second time, the facts will be laid before the Governing Body and such further punishment will be inflicted as the circumstances require”.

The next day Mr. Oaten returned to the college. He was interviewed by a select number of students and the matter was amicably settled. The students admitted that there had been on their part a technical breach of rules, while Mr. Oaten expressed regret for what had happened. Mr. Oaten was enthusiastically cheered by the students when he left the college premises in the afternoon and everything seems to have ended peacefully. It now appears that after the strike was over Mr. James called together all the European members of the staff and impressed upon them that they should not on any account touch the person of students, as experience had shown that this invariably led to serious trouble. This demonstrates how utterly unfounded was the impression that Mr. James lacked sympathy towards the students of the college. On the day following the strike, an untoward event, however unexpectedly happened. Mr. Oaten had to lecture to some of his students in history. When he went to his class he found that a dozen students were present, of whom ten had been absent on the day previous. He asked the students who had been absent to leave the class. As Mr. Oaten explained to the Committee, he did so to mark his disapproval of the conduct of his own students who had failed to stand loyally by him. These students thereupon withdrew from the class and complained to the Principal of the treatment they had received at the hands of their professor. The Principal sent the complaint to Mr. Oaten, who replied in writing seeking to justify his action as a disciplinary mea-



sure. Mr. James had expressed the opinion before the Committee that the action taken by Mr. Oaten was extremely injudicious, and in that view we all concur. The students of the College in general applied to the Principal on the same day to remit the fine which had been imposed on them. The application was rejected by the Principal with the concurrence of the Governing Body and we have ample evidence that this refusal created considerable discontent among the students. We are informed, however, that the fine was subsequently reduced to a nominal amount in the case of some poor students and partially remitted in the case of others who had attended classes on the second though not on the first day of the strike.

We next come to the second incident, which took place on the 15th February following. On that day there was an accident in the Chemical Laboratory and the Professor of Chemistry was not able to take one of the classes. The lecture was delivered by a substitute, who dismissed the class five minutes before the appointed time. The students passed out of the laboratory and proceeded along the corridor. The evidence shows that they talked to each other and were possibly somewhat noisy. Mr. Oaten was very near the end of a lecture he was delivering in a room adjoining the corridor. (The room and the corridor, it may be added, are different from those which formed the scene of the first incident.) He came and remonstrated with one of the students. As soon as he turned his back and was about to enter the room, another student in the crowd, Kamalabhusan Bose, called one of his fellow-student, Panchanan by name. There is no reason to suppose that the boy did so with intent to create a disturbance or to annoy Mr. Oaten. Mr. Oaten, however, heard the boy call out in this way, came out of the room, caught hold of him, took him to the steward and had him fined Re. 1/-. The boy asserts that he was caught by the neck and was called a rascal ; Mr. Oaten, on the other hand, asserts that he took the boy by the arm and denies that he called him a rascal. Whatever might have actually happened, it is certain that the impression quickly got abroad that the boy had been rudely treated, as a matter of fact the boy forthwith complained to Mr. James that he had been caught by the neck and called a rascal. Mr. James thereupon directed the boy to make a written complaint and to see him later in the day. It appears now that Mr. James asked Mr. Oaten to see him about the matter and to meet the boy in the Principal's room. The boy appears to have drafted a petition forthwith and to have taken it home with the intention of showing it to his father ; this draft has been produced before us ; the fair copy was filed before the Principal on the day following. Meanwhile about two hours after this incident and shortly before 3 O'Clock Mr. Oaten went to the ground floor of the College premises to post a notice on the Notice Board. He observed a number of students (his own estimate is from 10 to 15) who were assembled near the foot of the staircase. They at once



surrounded him, threw him on the floor and brutally assaulted him. Mr. Gilchrist, who was on the first floor, heard a noise and rushed down to help Mr. Oaten, but the assailants disappeared before he could reach the spot. We are not concerned with the question of identification of the actual assailants of Mr. Oaten. In fact that matter is under investigation by the Governing Body of the College ; they have, we understand upon evidence taken by them, expelled two of the students of the College on the ground that their complicity on the assault has been proved, and the enquiry has not yet been closed. There can, in our opinion, be no question as to the gravity of the offence committed by the persons who organised and carried out the assault, and whoever is shown to have been implicated in this disgraceful affair deserves severe punishment. We are, however, concerned here with the strike and the assault only in connection with the question of the general conditions of discipline at the Presidency College.

These then are in outline the incidents with special reference to which we are called upon to consider the general conditions of discipline in the Presidency College and to formulate our conclusions. Are we really forced to what, if true, would be a disquieting conclusion, namely, that the general tone of the College is bad because although in ordinary circumstances everything works smoothly, yet, when a dispute occurred between a professor and the students, a considerable proportion of the students behaved as if they were undisciplined ? Or is it the right view that there is no ground for anxiety as to the condition of the College because the two incidents mentioned, however discreditable, are due entirely to accidental circumstances and should be regarded only as unfortunate events of an exceptional and isolated character ? We are not disposed to take an entirely optimistic view of the situation ; at the same time we feel convinced that it would be unjust to base on these two incidents alone a sweeping condemnation of the entire college or to conclude that there had been any lack of strenuous and successful effort on the part of the Principal and the staff to maintain discipline in the institution. The true reasons for the present condition of things must, we think, be sought for in other directions and to these we shall now proceed to refer.

The evidence proves conclusively the presence in the college and the collegiate hostel of a number of turbulent youths whose capacity for mischief is by no means of a restricted character and who are evidently able to make their presence felt whenever there is an occasion calculated to excite the students to an outbreak against authority. The circumstances to which the pernicious influence of this class of students may rightly be attributed are not far to seek, and, as will presently appear, they have been in a large measure beyond the control of even the most devoted and efficient Principal. (1) In the first place, we hold it undeniable that during the last ten years there has been a ferment amongst students in general, due mainly to



what may be called causes of a political character which need not be described here in detail. This has led in many instances to a manifest spirit of insubordination and a reluctance to render unquestioning obedience to rules and orders promulgated by lawful authority. (2) In the second place, there is baneful influence of obviously injudicious discussions in the public press whenever a case of breach of discipline arises in an educational institution. The harm caused in this way is incalculable. (3) In the third place, we are bound to dwell upon the possibility of a disturbing influence of a very grave character. No evidence is needed in proof of the undoubted fact that revolutionary propagandists have with considerable success carried on their work among students and have from time to time brought into their camp disaffected youths of even considerable ability. To what precise extent the influence of that organisation may have affected the rank and file of Presidency College students, it is impossible to determine on the evidence before us ; but it is significant that the hostel premises have been searched more than once in quite recent years, though on neither occasion was any incriminating article found. We cannot ignore the fact that one student of the college has been prosecuted under the Indian Arms Act and that his conviction was upheld by the High Court. We cannot also overlook the fact that action under the Defence of India Act has been taken by Government against more than one student of the institution. Events like these in connection with what is rightly deemed the premier college in this Presidency are undoubtedly calculated to cause serious anxiety amongst all persons truly interested in its welfare and reputation and the gravity of the situation is unquestionably no way reduced when we bear in mind the character of the assault on Mr. Oaten. It may be conceded that no assault would probably have taken place on the particular day but for what may be called the Kamala incident. Yet it would be idle to disguise the fact that the assault was not committed by a mob of angry students in the heat of the moment but was premeditated and carefully organised. In these circumstances, we are of opinion that special precautions should in future be exercised in the matter of the admission of students to the college, that their conduct there should be carefully watched, and that all suspicious characters should be promptly removed from the rolls by the Governing Body. (4) In the fourth place, the arrangement which divides the staff of the college into two Services—The Indian Educational Service and the Provincial Educational Service—has generated in the mind of many an educated Indian a sense of real grievance which, there is good reason to apprehend, has been reflected upon the minds of students in general. The Indian Educational Service, as is well known, is confined to those who were recruited by the Secretary of State in London and are mainly Europeans ; the Provincial Educational Service consists of all those, irrespective of their qualifications, who were appointed by the Local Government. The feeling



has thus become prevalent to a considerable extent that young European Professors are unfairly allowed preference over experienced Indian professors of equivalent attainments. It is, we think lamentable that this impression should continue to gain ground, because the inevitable effect is that almost every European professor, when he first enters upon the discharge of his duties starts at an obvious disadvantage and with a certain amount of prejudice against him ; he is regarded by the students as a member of an unjustly favoured class, and this feeling is probably shared, though it may never be expressed, by some of the young professors' Indian colleagues.

(5) In the fifth place we cannot refrain from mentioning the harm done by the occasional use of tactless expressions by certain European professors in addressing students. For instance evidence has been given before us to the effect that a professor of the College as Chairman of a meeting of students in the Eden Hindu Hostel once said in substance that as the mission of Alexander the Great was to hellenise the barbarian people with whom he came into contact, the mission of the English here was to civilize the Indians. The use of the term "barbarian" in this connection in its literal Greek sense, *i.e.*, "non-hellenic", was misunderstood and engendered considerable bitterness of feeling. It is also plain that, although the true meaning was subsequently explained, the explanation reached only a small proportion of those who had heard the original version. We also had evidence to the effect that a young European professor asked certain students in the Presidency College why they were howling like wild beasts ; another asked on a different occasion why they were chattering like monkeys ; while a third is reported to have enquired of his students why they had behaved like coolies. Only four such instances have been reported to us as having occurred in four years, but reports of these have spread and have not been forgotten. We are convinced that in none of these instances had the professor concerned any ill-will towards the students or a desire to wound their feelings ; yet the deplorable fact remains that these unfortunate expressions have been interpreted as an index of ill-will on the part of the professors towards their students or towards Indians in general. We are equally convinced that if a healthier tone had prevailed generally among the students, these expressions would probably not have been interpreted as they have been. But while we wish to emphasize the necessity for caution and tactfulness on the part of professors in their treatment of students, we are inclined to the view that the danger of misunderstanding would be appreciably diminished by natural intercourse between European professors and their students such as is calculated to lead to a better mutual appreciation. We realise, however, that the Presidency College is so located as to render practically impossible, for the present at any rate, such intercourse between the European professors (who are compelled to live far away from the College premises) and their students, the large majority of whom are scat-



tered all over the city. (6) We may finally add that the evidence shows the existance of what may be called a spirit of excessive touchiness amongst students of the rising generation. They have a very keen sense of what they call their rights, but we have unfortunately not gained the impression that they are equally alive to their responsibilities. This characteristic is, in our opinion, a matter for serious concern. If a student has a grievance he can make his submission to his Principal ; but he must distinctly realise that the Principal's decision is final and has to be accepted loyally and cheerfully. The position becomes intolerable when a student, who fails to obtain from the authorities of his college what he deems to be just redress, considers that he may take the law into his own hands and even call on his fellow-students to go on strike. Even a tacit acquiescence in so pernicious a doctrine must inevitably lead to defiance of law and order and speedily end in the annihilation not only of all academic but of all civilized communal life. Whilst we recognise that every legitimate grievance should be enquired into, students should be made clearly to understand that a frivolous complaint is in itself a breach of college discipline and will be treated accordingly. With these preliminary observations we proceed to start our recommendations :—

(1) The Governing Body of the College should be reconstituted. It should be of a more representative character than at present and should be brought into closer contact with Government on the one hand and the community on the other. The Director of Public Instruction should obviously be a member of the Governing Body and its President 'ex-officio'. The Principal should be an 'ex-officio' member and Secretary. There should be four other members of the staff on the Governing Body, two Europeans and two Indians, all to be nominated by the Director of Public Instruction in consultation with the Principal. Two representatives of the Indian Community and one representative of the non-official European community should also be invited to join the Governing Body ; there should be no difficulty in the selection of such representative men as have worked amongst Indian students and are familiar with the conditions of student life in Calcutta, and one of them may very well be appointed Vice-President of the Governing Body.

The College Council which consists entirely of professors and lecturers, should, as hitherto, continue as an Advisory Body which would be consulted by the Principal whenever he desired.

(2) The Consultative Committee of students has, we understand, been disbanded. If the Principal desires to re-constitute the Committee in future, he should himself nominate the members on the recommendation of the professors. The system of election which owed its origin to the natural wish of the Principal to secure a Committee whose views would represent as closely as possible those of the general body of students, has proved a



failure, as it has brought on the Committee students of what may be called the demagogue type who are not necessarily the most desirable members from an intellectual and moral standpoint. Mr. Moitra does not share the view indicated in this sentence.

(3) The evidence taken by the Committee clearly shows that some at any rate of the members of the Students Consultative Committee entirely failed in their duty on the occasion of the strike in January. They had been elected as representative students and occupied a position of some trust and responsibility ; yet they neglected to assist the Principal in his endeavour to deal effectively with the strike. There is also good reason to hold that some of the members deliberately misrepresented the attitude of the Principal at that time and thereby rendered more difficult the settlement of the strike. One of the members has already been expelled by the Governing Body on account of his conduct in connexion with the assault on Mr. Oaten ; but the action of the members during the strike does not appear to have been yet investigated. The Governing Body should now fully investigate the conduct of each member of the Consultative Committee at the time of the strike, and should take strong action against any members who were found to have been implicated.

(4) The departmental system which has been introduced in the College should be retained ; but we strongly advise that a member of a department should not be chosen as its head merely because he is a member of the Indian Educational Service. The professors and lecturers who form the members of a department, it should also be generally understood, stand in the relation of colleagues to each other, and any point of difference that may arise between them should be referred to the Principal for his ultimate decision.

(5) There is a potentiality for grave dissatisfaction in the relations between members of the Indian Educational Service and the Provincial Educational Service. The members of the teaching staff should consequently be appointed, not to Services, but to posts on an incremental salary, and this is also the soundest course to follow from an educational point of view. If effect were given to this recommendation, much of the discontent which now prevails in the Provincial Educational Service would disappear. A healthier tone of comradeship would prevail amongst all the members of the professorial staff, and this could not but produce a beneficial effect upon the students as well.

(6) European professors, more especially the professors of Arts subjects, should possess a competent knowledge of the vernacular and, if their tastes are literary, should receive every encouragement to acquire some knowledge of an Indian classical language. Such knowledge of the vernacular is likely to foster better understanding between teachers and students. As it is difficult for a professor to learn a language in addition to the due perfor-



mance of his professorial duties, facilities should be given to educational officers appointed in England to obtain a scientific grounding at home, and their duties when they first join should be so arranged as to give them opportunities for acquiring a sound working knowledge of the vernacular.

(7) The Principal should take an active part in the work of instruction of the students and thus come into direct contact with them. A Principal who is constrained to occupy mainly the position of an administrator can hardly be expected to exercise a permanent and effective influence upon the students, as he would unquestionably do if he had the opportunity by direct teaching to impress upon them a full recognition of his high intellectual attainments. In order that the Principal may be able to deliver lectures, he should we think, be relieved of routine duties as far as possible, which may be delegated to a professor who would hold a position similar to that of the Dean of an English College. We understand that a scheme has already been drawn up by the Governing Body of the College with a view to give effect to the suggestion we now make, and we trust it will receive early consideration.

(8) We consider that the Indian members of the staff of a college of the standing of Presidency College should be graduates of special distinction and usually with some experience in teaching work, even though this may occasionally involve transfers of professors from other colleges. Scholars of this stamp alone are likely to be able to command readily the respect of their students and to maintain a position of equality as professors in the company of their European colleagues.

(9) The question of possible structural alterations in the building should be investigated and every effort made (by the erection of additional staircases or other devices of a likely nature) to minimise the likelihood of disturbance in the corridors.

(10) It is essential that a definite pronouncement should be made by Government as to the incalculable mischief likely to result from the injudicious discussion in the public press of questions relating to breaches of discipline in educational institutions. At the same time we recognise that the most effective remedy for the situation would be the creation of an 'explet de corps' which would render impossible the ventilation of grievances in the public press.

(11) The question of a thorough reorganisation of the Eden Hindu Hostel should be immediately taken up for consideration. It is obviously an unsatisfactory arrangement to leave 250 students under one Superintendent, for, however, efficient and devoted he may be, he cannot possibly exercise any real control over his words. The arrangements contemplated for the provision of residential quarters for the Principal and some European members of the staff in the immediate neighbourhood of the hostel should be made for the accommodation in the hostel of some Indian members of the



staff. We regard these recommendations as of such vital importance that we press for the immediate assignment of the necessary funds in spite of the present financial position. This so far as we can judge, is the only means at present feasible, so as to enable the residents of the hostel to have the benefit of social intercourse with the members of the college staff. We observe that the hostel is divided into five wards, each under a professor as a Warden. These professors should be encouraged to visit the hostel at intervals, and at such hours of the day, as to make it possible for them to have friendly intercourse with the students under their charge. We desire, finally, to sound an emphatic note of warning in reference to the building of hostels in the future. The evidence has convinced us that a large hostel with inadequate supervision is a source of grave danger to a college, and we strongly advocate that no hostel should accommodate more than 40 or 50 students in charge of a resident Superintendent, preferably a member of the college staff.

(12) While we have made the above recommendations for the construction of certain additional residential quarters in the neighbourhood of the present hostel, and while we consider that this provision is essential so long as the college continues in its present position, yet we desire to place it on record as to our emphatic opinion that the situation of the college is most distinctly unsuitable on account of its surroundings, both from the point of view of the congested character of the neighbourhood and the impossibility of adequate expansion in the future even at an enormous cost. The problem of the creation of a University town and the removal of the college to a more healthy and commodious site in the immediate neighbourhood of Calcutta and with easy reach of the Indian community whose boys receive instruction in the institution is by no means impossible of solution. The question is one of grave importance and we feel convinced that unless it is approached and solved in a generous and statesmanlike spirit, there is no real hope for radical improvement it is imperative that the large majority of the students—in fact all who do not reside with their parents or natural guardians—should be removed from unhealthy influences and every possible facility be given for a free social intercourse between the students and the members of the staff, both European and Indian.

We understand that with a view to indicate their unqualified disapproval of the lamentable events which have happened in the college during the last two months, the Government of Bengal have directed that the College should be deemed closed for the remainder of the current academical session, subject to the reservation that the annual examination of the 1st and 3rd year students will be held in due course on such dates as may be specified by the Principal and that the students in the M.A. and M.Sc. classes will be sent-up for their respective examinations on the dates prescribed by the University authorities. In view of the action so taken



by the Government, which will have operated as a punishment upon all the students of the college we are of opinion that no further disciplinary action need be taken in respect of the college as a whole, though individual delinquents implicated in the strike and the assault on Mr. Oaten should be suitably dealt with by the Governing Body.

The 3rd April  
1916

Ashutosh Mookherjee  
W. W. Hornell  
C. W. Peake  
J. Mitshell  
Herambachandra Maitra



# SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE AND THE BURMESE FREEDOM MOVEMENT\*

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Burma was one of the Southeast Asian countries which was utilized by Subhas Chandra Bose, Provisional Government of Azad Hind (Free India) and the *Azad Hind Fauj* (Indian National Army) as a base of operations and armed attack on the British *Raj* in India during the crucial war years 1944-1945. The part played by Subhas Bose and the Indian nationals in Burma and Southeast Asia in the final stage of India's freedom movement is well known to all students of modern Indian history. The aim of this paper is to highlight some less known aspects of Subhas Bose's political activities, *i.e.* his contacts with the leaders of the Burmese freedom movement prior to the outbreak of the Pacific war and his relations with the representatives of the wartime independent Burmese state in the years 1943-1945. We venture to suggest that these represent not only an interesting part of Subhas Bose's life and political career, but also an important chapter in the history of modern Indo-Burmese political relations.

Burma, similiarly as India, was subjected to British colonial rule in the course of the 19th century and was administered as an Indian province until the Separation in 1937. Under British domination, the two countries were bound by many economic and socio-political ties. The modern Burmese freedom movement, dating back to the First World War, was guided by the example of the Indian freedom movement in the interwar years. The succeeding generations of Burmese national leaders watched the political development of India closely, particularly the activities of the Indian National Congress, which provided them with ideas and inspiration, in regard to methods as well as the programme of action.

\* Paper presented at Netaji Bhawan, Calcutta, on 23 January 1973.  
Chairman . Dr R C. Majumdar.



The contacts between the two movements were facilitated by the presence of a large Indian community in Burma and last but not least also by the fact that several prominent Indian leaders imprisoned by the British authorities for their political activities were sent to serve their terms in Burmese prisons between the two world wars. One of them was Subhas Chandra Bose, who spent almost two years (1925-1927) in the prisons of Mandalay and Insein. While in custody, he met some Burmese political prisoners, including radical Buddhist monks. From them and by his own study he learned a lot about Burmese history, culture and politics and soon "developed a strong liking for the Burmese people".<sup>1</sup> Subhas Bose came to know Burma well and retained his interest in current Burmese political issues, especially the progress of the Burmese freedom movement, even after his return to India.

The pre-war Burmese freedom movement gathered momentum in the second half of the thirties when the *Dobama Asiayone* (We-Burmans Association), a nationalist party headed by radical members of the national intelligentsia and petty bourgeoisie (known as *Thakins*) came to the forefront. The Thakins, particularly the second generation of their young leaders who gained prominence in 1938, were eager to closely cooperate with the Indian National Congress. The Dobama Asiayone began to send delegates to the annual sessions of the Congress since that year. The Thakin leaders, interested in Marxist, Socialist and radical ideas and doctrines, turned mainly to the Left Wing of the Congress. Several Left Wing Congress politicians were invited to come to Burma while the activities of others were closely watched and studied by the Dobama leadership.

Many Thakins favourably received the radical views of the anti-imperialist struggle, expressed and advocated by Subhas Bose in his capacity as the President of the Indian National Congress and later on as the leader of the Forward Bloc.<sup>2</sup> Subhas Bose's popularity with young Thakin leaders may be attributed, in the first place, to the fact that his views provided a clear alternative to Gandhism, an ideology and method of



action based on principles of non-violence. The latter never had strong roots in the rank and file of Dobama as in the Indian National Congress at though certain Gandhian methods, e.g. civil disobedience, were used by Thakin leaders in the course of their anti-colonial struggle. The failure of the constitutional campaigns waged by Dobama in the years 1938-1939, had, however, convinced many Thakins that the such methods would not lead to their cherished goal of national independence. When the Second World War began in Europe, Burma, as India, was declared a belligerent country by Britain. Dobama opposed this decision being convinced that this was a war unleashed by the imperialists for the purpose of dividing the world afresh amongst themselves. The Thakin leaders were, however, not unanimous in their appraisal of the domestic and the international situation, particularly, of the cardinal question as to the course the anti-imperialist struggle in Burma should follow at that stage. Some Marxist Thakins, namely the representatives of the Communist Party of Burma which was founded in August 1939 as a small organization within the Left Wing of Dobama, favoured the anti-imperialist struggle to be directed above all against fascism in Europe and Japanese militarism in Asia, in a temporary alliance with Britain. The Dobama leadership expressed its readiness to render support to Britain in the war against Nazi Germany provided the British Government solemnly promised independence to the country at the end of the war. The negative attitude of Britain towards Burmese national aspirations and the unwillingness of the British ruling circles to commit themselves to any statement on future political status of Burma however made, most Thakins, nationalists as well as leftists, oppose the policy of supporting the British war effort and led them to agree with Subhas Bose that the freedom movements in both the countries should make the fullest use of the involvement of Britain in the World War for their own common goal, i.e. attainment of national independence. An underground wing of the Dobama Asiayone, including some non-Thakin elements, propagated armed struggle in 1939. To the Burmese



nationalists most likely source of help appeared to be Japan, at that time the strongest rival of Britain in Southeast Asia. Working for the unity of all the patriotic forces, for the establishment of a united anti-imperialist front, the Thakins initiated the founding of the Burma Freedom Bloc in October 1939. The Freedom Bloc rallied a number of political parties and organizations round Dobama. Dr. Ba Maw, the former Premier of the Burmese Colonial Government was designated its President-Dictator and Thakin Aung San its General Secretary.

It has been suggested by some historians that Burma Freedom Bloc derived its name from the Forward Bloc fathered by Subhas Bose.<sup>3</sup> The two organizations had not only a similar name but also a common platform. Both stood for complete national independence and uncompromising anti-imperialist struggle for attaining it, held similar attitudes towards the world war and the belligerents and favoured a post-war order built on a Socialist basis.<sup>4</sup> The Burma Freedom Bloc, following the example of the Forward Bloc, launched an anti-war agitation and campaign in the years 1939-1940 under the slogan "Britain's difficulty is Burma's chance", and won popular support.

Contact between the Forward and the Freedom Bloc was established in 1940 when Subhas Bose was met by Aung San and other members of the Thakin delegation who came to India to attend the Ramgarh session of the Indian National Congress.<sup>5</sup> The Thakin delegates met Subhas Bose twice. They agreed with him, among other things, that the anti-imperialist struggle in India and Burma should be coordinated and developed to a higher plane.<sup>6</sup> Before any such effective cooperation could be established, however, the British authorities struck hard at the radical anti-colonialist opposition in India and Burma, arrested Bose and most of other Forward and Freedom Bloc leaders with the result that the two organizations virtually ceased to exist in their legal form. Aung San, who only narrowly escaped arrest, left Burma secretly for Japan in August 1940 to seek contacts with the Japanese and



obtain their assistance against the British. Under the agreement which pro-Japanese groups of Burmese nationalists and Thakins reached with the agents of the Japanese military intelligence, a group of twenty-nine Burmese volunteers, mostly Thakins, were subsequently sent, in 1940-1941, to undergo military training in Japan. They formed the nucleus and the command of the Burma Independence Army (B.I.A.) formed in December 1941 on Thai territory and which later participated in the armed struggle against the British colonialists during the Japanese invasion of Burma.

Subhas Bose, who like Aung San left India secretly in 1941 to organize the anti-British struggle abroad, apparently did not know about these developments in the Burmese freedom movement. This may be inferred from his secret message of May 20, 1941, addressed to his comrades in India, in which he asked them to send out emissaries to Burma to make contact with Dobama and other "revolutionary parties" there.<sup>7</sup> There is no evidence at least to the present author's knowledge that such steps were taken.

With the outbreak of the Pacific War, developments in India and Burma took different courses. Due to external factors, i.e. the Japanese attack on the British colonial possessions in Southeast Asia, the anti-colonial struggle in Burma acquired new dimensions. When in 1942 the Indian National Congress under Mahatma Gandhi passed the famous "Quit India Resolution", the B.I.A. and other nationalists in Burma had been openly fighting the British on the Japanese side. The British were compelled to quit Burma and the Japanese militarists, in order to pacify the freedom-loving Burmese people, were forced to grant Burma independence in 1943. The independence was a nominal one, the Japanese remaining masters of the country, but it heightened the political and national consciousness of the Burmese people. Most of the leaders of the pre-war Dobama and the Freedom Bloc decided to accept positions in the newly created administrative organs, political and military organizations of the Burmese state, to be able to wring out more concessions from the Japanese military. The former



President of Burma Freedom Bloc, Dr. Ba Maw, became the Premier and Head of State of Burma and Aung San, promoted to the rank of Major-General, the Defence Minister.

By granting nominal independence to Burma in mid 1943, the Japanese militarists, with an eye upon India as the next target of their expansion, hoped also to create expectations for independence among Indian nationals. With Japanese support, the Indian Independence League and the Indian National Army (I.N.A.) were formed from among Indian nationals in Southeast Asia and captive Indian troops. Subhas Chandra Bose, who came to Malaya in July 1943, became the leading spirit of the anti-British struggle of Southeast Asian Indians.

In the middle of 1943 Subhas Bose renewed his contacts with the former leaders of Burma Freedom Bloc. In July 1943 he met Dr. Ba Maw at Singapore and next month he came, as his guest, to Rangoon to participate in the Burmese independence ceremonies.<sup>8</sup> In the broadcast speech, delivered on the Independence Day, the 1st August 1943, over the Rangoon Radio, Bose stated : "The independence of Burma .....has a twofold significance for us. It shows in the first place what a nation can achieve if it knows how to seize an opportunity which history has offered. Secondly, just as the conquest of India supplied the British with a jumping-off ground for their attack on Burma in the nineteenth century, similarly the emancipation of Burma has supplied the Indian independence movement in East Asia with a springboard for its attack on Britain's army of occupation in India during the twentieth century."<sup>9</sup>

Burma was one of the countries which recognized the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, formed on October 21, 1943 at Singapore with Subhas Bose as Head of State. Thakin Nu, the Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Burmese Government issued, on this occasion, an official statement which reads in conclusion : "The provisional Indian Government is.....deserving of the unstinted support of every nation that believes in fairness and justice as the foundation of the New World Order".<sup>10</sup> The Head of State of Burma, Ba Maw, ex-



pressed his support to the Azad Hind Government during the Assembly of the Greater East Asiatic Nations in Tokyo, in November 1943, which Subhas Bose attended as the Head of the Government. Subhas Bose, who needed to operate from a base as close to India as possible asked Ba Maw for permission to shift his headquarters to Burma and Ba Maw complied with this request.<sup>11</sup>

The headquarters of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind moved to Rangoon on the 7th January 1944 and remained there until the Japanese evacuation of the Burmese capital in April 1945. The years 1944-1945 were the period of Subhas Bose's closest relations with the leaders of the Burmese state. Being the Head of State of Azad Hind, Subhas Bose, apart from carrying out his main task of organising and preparing for the armed attack on India, had to attend to numerous other duties, viz., the administration of the Indian community of Burma. With the establishment of the Azad Hind Government, all non-resident Indians in Burma, as elsewhere in Southeast Asia, became subjects of that government.<sup>12</sup> Owing to the role played by Indian business and enterprise in pre-war Burmese economy and to the fact that a part of the Indian community (non-resident Indians) came under the jurisdiction of the Azad Hind organs, while the rest (resident, naturalized Burmese Indians) under that of the Burmese state organs, the relations between the Azad Hind and Burmese Governments were of a complex nature and presented some difficult problems. Azad Hind Government officials demanded the special legal protection be given to naturalized Indians of Muslim religion, but the Burmese Government insisted on maintaining one common status of all resident Indians in Burma and turned the demand down.<sup>13</sup> There were also disputes over the ownership of the immovable property of the Indian evacuees who left the country on the eve of the Japanese invasion and which came temporarily under the control of the Azad Hind Government before being confiscated by the Japanese military.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, as noted by a Burmese observer, "all questions arising out of the presence of Indians



in Burma were settled on terms of friendship, equality and reciprocity and there was nothing to be vocal about".<sup>15</sup> It is noteworthy that in wartime Burma there were no communal (Indo-Burmese) troubles and riots which plagued the Burmese social and political life from time to time prior to 1942. This was even more remarkable in view of the fact that the Japanese militarists tried their best to encourage the Burmese Indians to flout the authority of the Azad Hind and the Burmese Governments in order to find a pretext to intervene in their internal affairs.<sup>16</sup> The success in tackling the so called "Indian problem" in Burma should be attributed equally to the political wisdom of Subhas Chandra Bose who exhorted Burmese Indians to adjust themselves to the new conditions and not to expect special privileges<sup>17</sup> as well as to the hospitality and friendly attitude of the Burmese Government which welcomed the Azad Hind Government to establish its advance base in Rangoon.<sup>18</sup> Cordial and friendly ties developed particularly between Subhas Bose and Ba Maw who used to meet each other frequently and discuss various problems of common interest.<sup>19</sup>

The Burmese Indians, despite numerous hardships, oppression by the Japanese militarists and unscrupulous behaviour of some Indian officials<sup>20</sup> rallied to the patriotic call of Subhas Bose. Out of the total sum of 215 million rupees which the Azad Hind Government managed to raise for liberating India, 150 million came from the Indian community in Burma.<sup>21</sup> The strength of the Indian National Army, stationed in Burma, reached about two divisions.<sup>22</sup>

In March 1944 the Japanese launched the long-postponed invasion of India on several sectors of Indian-Burmese frontier with the participation of the I.N.A. units. Subhas Chandra Bose watched the operations very closely. During the invasion he often spoke over the Rangoon Radio and broadcast messages to the I.N.A. soldiers and the people of India. The Rangoon Radio and the Burmese Press gave full coverage to the situation on the front and the operations of the Indian National Army.

This is not the place to detail the progress of the 1944 in-



vasion which started with some initial success of the Japanese army and the I.N.A. but ended in their complete defeat. What concerns us more is that Bose took the defeat bravely and that it did not stop him from going ahead with the paramount objective of his life. This fact was noticed and admired by his Burmese friends.<sup>23</sup> Subhas Bose did not consider the struggle against British imperialism to be lost even when the Allied troops began to thrust deep into Burma at the end of 1944. To keep the struggle going, he worked out, with Dr. Ba Maw, who shared his views on the future course the Burmese and Indian freedom movements at that stage, a common plan of joint operations by the I.N.A. and the Burmese national army. The plan envisaged that the two armies would stay out of the actual fighting against the British offensive, keep themselves in readiness in certain strategic areas, and upon the Japanese withdrawal from Burma start an anti-British resistance with the arms left behind by the Japanese.<sup>24</sup>

Subhas Bose, who was an experienced and realistic politician, must have been aware of the ultimate objectives of the Axis Powers, particularly of Japan which was supporting Indian nationalists not because of any altruistic motives but to extend her domination over India. Although his relations with the Japanese militarists became particularly strained after the failure of the invasion of India, he never openly criticised Japan and remained on her side till the very end. Ba Maw, who knew Subhas Bose well, makes the following comment : "For him (i.e. Subhas Bose-JB), whether the Germans and the Japanese were good or bad was not the point ; the point was whether the imperialisms destroying the Asian nations should themselves be destroyed and who would destroy them. The answer was clear : only Germany and Japan could do it in this war, and so the colonial countries in Asia must fight for their victory".<sup>25</sup>

Neither Bose nor Ba Maw was, however, able to carry out the above-mentioned plan of anti-British resistance. That was not only because the Axis Powers upon whom they relied were suffering serious setbacks in 1944-1945, but especially due to



the fact that the general international situation and the internal political situation in Burma at the end of the Second World War did not favour the conception of the anti-imperialist struggle of colonial countries their plan was based upon.

In entering the Second World War, Great Britain declared that she was waging the war to make democracy safe in the world and to liberate European countries enslaved by fascists. But she herself was holding many countries of several continents in a state of colonial subjugation. These colonies, declared belligerent without the consent of their peoples, had no stake in Britain's victory in the war, as the British ruling circles were not willing to grant them national independence at the end of hostilities. With the aggression of Nazi Germany against the Soviet Union and the USSR joining of the Allied coalition, the character of the confrontation between the Allied and the Axis Powers changed considerably, the Second World War becoming anti-fascist as well as anti-imperialist. The final defeat of the Axis Powers became a matter of life or death not only to the European nations struggling to regain their lost national independence against Nazi Germany but also to the Asian colonial nations who were previously dominated by the Western colonial powers and occupied by Japan during the Second World War. Although the Western colonial powers were seeking to restore their pre-war colonial empires in Asia, the leading role played by the USSR in the Allied coalition contributed considerably to weaken imperialism and colonialism on a global scale, creating favourable conditions for the spread of anti-imperialist struggle in Asia. The anti-imperialist struggle of Asian nations, coordinated and gradually integrated with their anti-fascist resistance, gained momentum towards the end of the Second World War, being aimed at the final defeat of world fascism, militarism, imperialism and colonial oppression, to achieve complete national emancipation and to build a new progressive social order.

In Burma, after the first wave of popular enthusiasm over the defeat of the British colonialists and the achievement of independence in 1942-1943, anti-Japanese feelings began to



mount steadily in 1944. The masses of the people brutally oppressed by the Japanese military became convinced that Japan's talk of her "liberating mission" in Asia was insincere and that only the expulsion of the Japanese from the country would make the nominal independence a real one. Although the majority of the people did not wish the restoration of the British colonial regime, anti-British resistance was unthinkable, as Britain was considered an ally, not an enemy, at the end of the war. In August 1944 the main resistance organizations, including large sections of the Burmese national army, formed a united national front—the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (A.F.P.F.L.). In March 1945, the entire Burmese national army under the leadership of the A.F.P.F.L. rose against the Japanese, starting the national anti-fascist revolution. Most of the pre-war Dobama leaders participated in the resistance movement and established contact with the Allies in India. Aung San, who, according to Ba Maw, initially expressed his agreement with the plan of anti-British resistance<sup>26</sup> became the most prominent leader of the anti-fascist revolution.

When the anti-Japanese hostilities broke out, the High Command of the Japanese army in Burma issued order to the I.N.A. to attack the revolting Burmese national army.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, the A.F.P.F.L. leaders tried to win the I.N.A. to their side, or at least to neutralize the I.N.A. troops in order to prevent disorder which might have harmed the progress of the anti-fascist revolution.<sup>28</sup> Subhas Bose, as the Supreme Commander of the I.N.A., refused to obey Japanese order as he did not want the I.N.A. to be used against the Burmese people to whom he felt sincerely devoted and grateful. Neither did he, however, join the A.F.P.F.L. in as much as he remained committed to his main goal—the anti-British struggle. The bulk of the Indian National Army in Burma stood neutral, surrendering later to the British<sup>29</sup> while some I.N.A. soldiers reached understanding with the Burmese national army and participated in the anti-fascist revolution.<sup>30</sup>

On the 25th April 1945, a few days before the Japanese evacuated Rangoon,<sup>31</sup> Bose flew out of the capital leaving



behind a message in which the Government and people of Burma for their help and hospitality, and stated, *inter alia*, "I am leaving Burma with a very heavy heart. We have lost the first round of our fight for Independence. But we have lost only the first round. There are many more rounds to fight. I have always said that the darkest hour precedes the dawn. We are now passing through the darkest hour ; therefore, the dawn is not far off ; India shall be free".<sup>32</sup>

From Subhas Bose's message of the 25th April 1945 follows that although Burma was the place where he had to taste to the full the bitterness of defeat of his life-long mission, his attitude towards Burma and the Burmese people remained, as they always had been, cordial and friendly. It should be noted also that neither of Subhas Bose's closest Burmese friends changed their attitude towards him, regardless of the fact that one, viz., Ba Maw stood aside of the anti-fascist revolution and the other viz., Aung San participated in it, Speaking at a public reception given to Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose, elder brother of Subhas Chandra Bose and a leading Congress leader of India, who came to Rangoon in July 1946, almost a year after the end of the Second World War, Major General Aung San, in his capacity as the President of the A.F.P.F.L. said\* :

"When Netaji Subhas Bose attempted to drive out foreign rulers from his own country during the past three or four years, it was perfectly right of him to do that as a patriot of India. When we did the same sort of thing in our country both in regard to the British imperialist rule and the Japanese Fascist domination, we feel thoroughly justified to have taken such courses, and we pride ourselves for such deeds. There may be some among us in India as well as in Burma who may not agree with what we did because they do not feel that we took correct steps. But who can deny or challenge the patriotism of Netaji or ourselves, who can say definitively we took the wrong paths ? Only history and none of us...can definitively give the true verdict".<sup>33</sup>

\* See Appendix for full text of General Aung San's speech and Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose's reply. Ed.



## References

1. Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle, 1920-1942* Ed. Sisir K. Bose, Netaji Research Bureau, Calcutta, 1964, p. 131. Hereafter quoted as Subhas Bose, *The Indian Struggle*.
2. Aung San, the General Secretary of the Dobama Asiayone in 1930-1940, recalled later, that he had read Subhas Bose's book "The Indian Struggle" banned in Burma, as in India, by the British authorities, and had also been familiar with Bose's speeches in the Indian National Congress. Aung San was impressed particularly with Bose's uncompromising attitude towards the British colonialists, his patriotism and devotion to India's national cause. See Mya Daun Njou, *Tebho Thoun Tjeip* (Thirty Comrades), Rangoon, 1943, pp. 22-24.
3. John F. Cady, *A History of Modern Burma*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1958, p. 416. Hereafter quoted as Cady, *A History of Modern Burma*. See also F. N. Trager, *Burma from Kingdom to Republic, A Historical and Political Analysis*, New York, 1966, p. 57.
4. Subhas Bose, *The Indian Struggle*, p. 414. In Burma Freedom Bloc, Socialist ideas, influenced partly by Marxism, were propagated mostly by the Left Wing of Dobama. Dr. Ba Maw, leader of the second most important party of the Bloc, the *Hsinyetha* Party (Poor Man's Party) also pledged himself to Socialism, but in actual practice always followed a nationalistic and pragmatic course. To reach understanding with other anti-imperialist elements in Burma, Leftist Thakins, however, also used in their 1939-1940 campaigns mostly nationalist slogans. As for the programme of the Dobama Asiayone passed at the annual conference of the party in March 1939 and later presented in a slightly modified version by the Dobama delegates at the annual session of the Indian National Congress at Ramgarh see *Dobama Asiayone, Manifesto of the Dobama Asiayone, Guardian Magazine*, Vol. VI, No. 1, ( January 1959 ) pp. 21-26.
5. Cady suggests that the President of the Freedom Bloc Dr. Ba Maw "had apparently been in communication" with Subhas Bose but we were not able to find any evidence supporting this contention. See Cady, *A History of Modern Burma*, p. 416.
6. *AICC Papers* (Nehru Memorial Museum of History), File No. 6, FD-5, 1940, p. 131.
7. Subhas C. Bose, *The Indian Struggle*, p. 435.
8. Ba Maw, *Breakthrough in Burma, Memoirs of a Revolution, 1939-1946*, Yale University Press, 1968, p. 349. Hereafter quoted as Ba Maw, *Breakthrough*.
9. Quoted in Ba Maw, *Breakthrough*, pp. 329-330.
10. *Statement by His Excellency Thakin Nu, the Foreign Minister, issued on the*



- occasion of the Establishment of the Provisional Indian Government*, quoted in *Burma*, Vol. I, No. 1, September 1944, p. 142.
11. Ba Maw, *Breakthrough*, p. 352.
  12. *U Hla Pe's Narrative of the Japanese Occupation of Burma*, Recorded by U Kin, Data Paper : Number 41, Southeast Asia Program Department of Far Eastern Studies, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, March 1961, p. 39. Hereafter quoted as *U Hla Pe's Narrative*.
  13. See Bandhula U Sein, *Tjunhnouptou atwmyei* (Our Internal Affairs), Rangoon, September 1946, Part II, p. 81
  14. Maun Tho, *Indija-Myanma Hseksamyei Hmattam* (A Record of Relations between India and Burma), Rangoon, 1966, p. 199. Hereafter quoted as Maun Tho, *Indija-Myanma*.
  15. *U Hla Pe's Narrative*, p. 39.
  16. *Ibid* , pp. 40-41
  17. *Ibid.*, p. 39
  18. *Ibid*
  19. Ba Maw, *Breakthrough*, p. 352.
  20. *U Hla Pe's Narrative*, p. 41
  21. Maun Tho, *Indija-Myanma*, p. 198 ; Gady, *A History of Modern Burma*, p. 177
  22. Maun Tho, *Indija-Myanma*, p. 200 ; Gady, *A History of Modern Burma*, p. 177
  23. Ba Maw, *Breakthrough*, p. 353
  24. *Ibid.*, pp. 370-371.
  25. *Ibid* , p. 356
  26. *Ibid* , p. 371.
  27. Maun Tho, *Indija-Myanma*, p. 201.
  28. Yebho Nei Aun, *Phekhasis tohlanyei thamain win satam mja* (Historical Documents of the Anti-Fascist Revolutionary), Rangoon, n.d., p. 133. See also Thakhin Tin Mya, *Bhoum bhawa hma phyin* (In the Communist Life), Myawati Magazine, Vol. 17, No. 8, June 1969, pp. 189-190.
  29. Maun Tho, *Indija-Myanma*, p. 201.
  30. *Ibid*.
  31. The Japanese garrison began to evacuate Rangoon on the 28th of April 1945. Next day the Japanese handed over the administration of the capital to the Infantry Battalion of the I. N. A. stationed there under the command of Captain Shah Nawaz Khan. When the Japanese completed their evacuation of Rangoon on 30th of April, the representatives of Rangoon branch of the A.F.P.F.L. approached Captain Khan and proposed him that the I.N.A. hand over the administration of the city to the A.F.P.F.L. and their arms to the Burmese national army, and subsequently also leave Rangoon. Captain Khan agreed that he would evacuate Rangoon with his troops but refused to hand



over arms and ammunition. Next day Rangoon was liberated by the A.F.P.F.L. and Burmese national army units. The I. N. A. did not oppose this move, keeping their arms which they later surrendered to the British. See *Two Historic Trials in Red Fort, An Authentic Account of the Trial by a General Court Martial of Captain Shah Nawaz Khan, Captain P. K. Sahgal and Lt. G. S. Dhillon and the Trial by a European Military Commission of Emperor Bahadur Shah*. Exhibit XXXXX, p. 385.

32. Quoted in *Testament of Subhas Bose. Being a complete and authentic record of Netaji's Broadcast Speeches, Press statements etc.* Compiled and edited by 'Arun'. Delhi Rajkamal Publications, 1946, p. 247.
33. "Welcome, Mr. Sarat Bose", *The Burma Digest*, Volume I, 15th August 1946, Number 11, pp. 7-8. (See Appendix for full texts of Aung San's Speech and Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose's reply.)



## APPENDIX

**WELCOME MR. SARAT CHANDRA BOSE**

*The following is the full text of the speech delivered by General Aung San as chairman of a public reception given to Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose in the City Hall, Rangoon, on 24 July, 1946.*

Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose, Ladies & Gentlemen,

On behalf of the people of Rangoon and Burma, I feel very happy indeed to welcome to this land of ours, Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose, a well-known leader of Bengal and India and, what is more, a great brother of a great leader and patriot of India—Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. Mr. Sarat Bose has come to this city to offer the benefits of his legal talents in what is popularly known as “INA trials”. But unfortunately the fascistic bureaucracy in this country, for fear of being exposed in their true, naked colours, cannot persuade themselves to allow patriots of India like Mr. Bose to come in and plead for their compatriots now on trial for “supposed” high crimes and offences committed during the days of Netaji’s Provisional Government of Azad Hind. A considerable number of our people in this country too are at this moment facing the same kind of “alleged” offences and crimes. Whereas, in the event of a free India and a free Burma, these people now on trial would have been treated as patriots, they are now taken to task for such patriotic action that they displayed during the three or four years of the World War which ended a year ago or so, apparently for the satisfaction of bureaucratic pride and retributive justice. We all know very well that these I.N.A. prisoners or the prisoners of our country similarly situated are truly decent and honest citizens incapable of doing wilful wrong to anybody. But then, in the eyes of foreign imperialist bureaucracy ruling both our countries, they have become great sinners, almost unpardonably, it seems. Unhappily, such facts serve but to remind us, with relentless pertinacity, of the chains of slavery that bind our two nations still.

During the recent World War II, we heard a lot about “Freedom” and “Democracy”. Immediately after the war even, we heard so much of “let us forget and forgive” attitude. To our country the British Government declared in their Parliament at that time that they came back not as conquerors but as liberators. During these few months, the British Government have been busy staging many a “dumb shows and noise” in India, proclaiming to all the world with their hands on their hearts that India would be granted independence if she so desires. But if I shall not



be far wrong, all these proclamations will come to nothing in the end and at any rate have not, to our eyes, so far produced any visible result that can lead India as speedily as possible to her goal of national freedom. Instead we have these trials by digging up the past during which they left us to our fate, the past of which they knew nothing and did not care to know anything. And let me ask those highly placed people responsible for bringing about these trials, this question: Is it how they are directed by the British Government to show their good will to India and Burma and to prove their sincerity of purpose in relation to questions of Indian and Burmese Freedom? But I forget, they are our masters still, to-day, whatever they may be tomorrow and therefore what they do as our masters must only be right, for have they not the immortalised motto of their legal wisdom which says: "The King can do no wrong"? And are not their courts of law administering the King's justice in the King's name? It is all a question of bureaucratic pride which, in fact, is no longer impressive to us in any way. But, certainly, this is not the right way of showing their good-will and proving their sincerity of purpose, and they will have themselves to blame if they do not and cannot get any responsive echo from us by having such trials and lawless laws, in the words of the late Deshbandhu C. R. Das, such as Defence of Burma Act and emergency laws in our country.

But to-day, I am not so much concerned with good-will and sincerity of our foreign rulers. In spite of our foreign rulers, in spite of their sincerity or insincerity, both India and Burma will be free in the not too distant future and then, doubtless all such patriotic prisoners as are now on trial in India and Burma and elsewhere will be free and honourably acquitted. And there need be no doubt about this. For the tide of history has now pushed India and Burma inevitably and irresistably to the path of immediate freedom, and that tide cannot be turned any longer by British imperialism which is today extremely weak economically and militarily. British imperialism, however, still hopes to be able to divide our ranks and rule us still longer. We in this country are fully determined to face this prospect and defeat the imperialist game of manoeuvre decisively in the not too distant future. We will not allow ourselves to be divided any more, we will win our freedom before too long. For is it not the inherent right of any people anywhere in the world to strive to win their own freedom, and have they not the right to revolt against any and every form of tyranny, oppression and exploitation, foreign as well as domestic? No nation has the right to rule another nation, and if any oppressed nation attempts to overthrow their oppressors, why should that act be considered treasonable or traitorous? When Netaji Subhas Bose attempted to drive out foreign rulers from his own country during the past three or four years, it was perfectly right of him to do that as a patriot of India. When we did



the same sort of thing in our country, both in regard to the British imperialist rule and Japanese fascist domination, we feel thoroughly justified to have taken such courses, and we pride ourselves for such deeds. There may be some among us in India as well as in Burma who may not agree with what we did because they do not feel that we took the correct steps. But who can deny or challenge the patriotism of Netaji or ourselves, who can say definitely that we took the wrong paths ? Only history and none of us, who are much too close to events, can definitely give the true verdict. I knew Netaji, even before I met him for the first time in Calcutta in 1940, by reading various accounts of his life of sacrifice and struggle and last of all, his own book "The Indian Struggle" which was in those days banned in India and Burma. I knew Netaji, as I came into close and frequent contact with him during this recent World War. I knew him and I knew his burning love for his country and his people, and his unflinching determination to fight for the freedom of his country. I knew him also as a sincere friend of Burma and Burmese people. Between him and myself, there was complete mutual trust ; and although time was against both of us so that we could not come to the stage of joint action for the common objective of the freedom of our respective nations, we did have an understanding in those days that, in any event, and whatever happened, the INA and the BNA should never fight each other. And I am glad to tell you to-day that both sides did observe the understanding scrupulously on the whole, during the days when we were up in arms against the Japs.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, we have to-day with us and amongst us the great brother of this great patriot and leader of India, Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose. We welcome him with open arms. We welcome him with all our heart and soul. We welcome him as one of the leaders of India himself, and we welcome him as a great brother of a great Indian. Let me take the opportunity of telling him that, as far as the A.F.P.F.L. of which I am President and which is admitted on all hands to be the only popular political organisation in this country, is concerned, our policy towards India and Indians in this country is one of the broadest conception and generosity, and Mr. Sarat Bose may find it for himself in the statements, resolutions and speeches of A.F.P.F.L. which I have presented to him. We have no axe to grind, we nurture no feelings of racial bitterness and ill-will. We stand for friendly relations with any and every nation in the world. Above all, and after all, we stand for more than friendly relations with our neighbours. We want to be not merely good neighbours, but good brothers even, the moment such course should become possible. We stand for an Asiatic Federation in a not very, very remote future, we stand for immediate mutual understanding and joint action, wherever and whenever possible, from now for our mutual interests and for the freedom of India, Burma and indeed all Asia. We stand for these, and we trust Indian



national leaders in India implicitly. A few months ago, that is, I think, in March, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru stopped for one night in Rangoon on his way back to India from Malaya. At that time, I met him and we discussed about these questions for about two hours. And now I am glad to have this further opportunity of having Mr. Sarat Bose in our midst so that we can still elaborate so many of our joint plans and actions together and so that we may hasten the days of Indian and Burmese freedom even much more speedily than they would come. Therefore, once again, on behalf of the people of Rangoon and Burma, I offer Mr. Sarat Bose a heartiest welcome to this city and our land. I would ask Mr. Bose to make himself perfectly at home during his stay in Rangoon for these few days, and he may rest assured that we will do everything possible to make him completely at home.



**MR. SARAT CHANDRA BOSE'S REPLY**

General Aung San, ladies and gentlemen,

I thank you most heartily for the cordial welcome you accorded me this evening. When I know all political parties and communal organisations are represented at this meeting, I can not find adequate words to express my thanks. As a matter of fact, since my arrival I have found everywhere only friendship and hospitality.

I look upon Burma as a holy land. Years ago, Lokamannya Tilak was kept in a British jail in Burma. Some years later, Lala Lajpat Rai and his comrades were confined in a prison of this country. In 1924, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was interned in Mandalay jail. Burma became the holiest of holy lands when in 1942 the Burmese and the Indians together launched their freedom movements in an unprecedented manner.

General Aung San has just reminded you that there was much talk on Freedom and Democracy by the British during the Second World War. Speaking for myself, I must frankly tell you that I have never believed in their talk on Freedom and Democracy. They always talk in that strain whenever they find themselves in a tight corner. I would say that their freedom means our slavery.

As you all know, in 1942, there was an intensive and extensive struggle for freedom, struggle inside India and struggle outside India. It was, of course, made under the inspiration of Mahatma Gandhi, but not under his leadership. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was the leader of that struggle. He chose to use a different weapon. There are people who agree with him and who do not agree with him, but it is too early to pronounce a verdict. History will record its verdict. At any rate, the Indian National Army fought most valiantly for Indian freedom. And whether one agrees with their method or not, credit must be given to them for their sincerity of purpose and courage. We all know that they succeeded in occupying some portion of Indian soil. In the same way, the Burma National Army fought most valiantly for Burmese freedom. On behalf of the Indians in India and in Burma, I would like to ask you, General Aung San, to accept our most sincere congratulations on your able leadership and to extend our words of praise to your men for their heroic deeds.

General Aung San has made touching references to my brother. I may repeat, with his permission, a few sentences from his speech. "I knew him also as a sincere friend of Burma and Burmese people. Between him and me, there was complete mutual trust, and although time was against both of us so that we could not come to the stage of joint action for the common object of the freedom of (our) respective nations, we did have an understanding in those days that, in any event and whatever happened, the I.N.A. and the B.N.A. should never fight each other. And I am glad to



tell you that both sides did observe the understanding scrupulously on the whole during the days when we were up in arms against the Japs." I am happy to know that in those days there was such an admirable comradeship between the Indians and the Burmese in their fight against their common enemy, British Imperialism.

I was in jail for four years during the war. I was then often amused at the way Imperialism condemned Fascism. What difference is there between Imperialism and Fascism? They are but blood-brothers. There is no difference except that Fascism is more virile. I am now amused to know that Sir Dorman-Smith\* has accused the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League of being fascist. George Bernard Shaw, the well-known writer, says that the last world war was a war between two rival Fascisms, one is Anglo-American Fascism and the other Italo-German Fascism. Anglo-American Fascists fought the German Fuehrer not because they do not like the idea of Fuehrer but because they want to have their own Fuehrers. I am sorry I cannot quote Bernard Shaw's words verbatim but he says to that effect. The Anglo-Americans do not fight for freedom and democracy but for ascendancy over the rest of the world.

One of my questioners is General Aung San and he asked me whether we pin much faith in the Constituent Assembly. I can only say that the Congress is just giving it a trial. It is a test of sincerity of the British Government. Beyond that the Congress has not gone. However, speaking for myself, I doubt that the Constituent Assembly will lead to a peaceful settlement. As a Congressman, I am prepared for the worst.

Ladies and gentlemen, freedom is a thing to live for, to work for, to suffer for and, if necessary, to die for. I feel confident that Indians and Burmese are fully determined to work for, to suffer for and, if necessary, to die for, their freedom. Their blood has been spilled in their struggle for freedom. In the Bible, it is said that the blood of the martyr is the seed of the church. With a slight alteration, I may say that the blood of the martyr is the seed of freedom. The united determination of both countries cannot be resisted by the British Government. There has all along been comradeship between India and Burma but the comradeship became truer and closer in 1942 to 1945. Let us march together, stage by stage, to the goal of freedom.

The younger section has often asked me on about Socialism and Communism. I have told them and I would repeat today: "Please do not bother about them now." We are not concerned to-day with Socialism, Communism, Marxism or any other "ism." We have no country to practise these "isms." We must get, first of all, our freedom, our independence. The only "ism" that we must have is Nationalism, strong and ardent

\*The British Governor of Burma. Ed.



Nationalism. When we are free, our endeavour should be to build up Socialist States in India and Burma. We must also have an Asiatic Federation. In China, San Yet Sent talked about it years ago. In India Deshbandhu C. R. Das talked about it. Of course, the time is not yet ripe for an Asiatic Federation, but we must keep it in view. Our primary duty at present is to fight for the freedom of our respective countries.

Now I want to address my Indian comrades in Burma, particularly Indian businessmen. You must identify yourselves completely with Burmese aspirations. Burma is, to you, almost a homeland, your land of adoption. The Indian National Congress is definitely against exploitation in all forms, whether white, brown, yellow or black. If any of you are found to be allying with British imperialists, the Congress will disown you. I repeat to you that you must completely identify yourselves with the Burmese in their struggle for freedom and in their work of reconstruction.

I am not one of those who believe that freedom is round the corner. It is true that in 1942-45, both India and Burma made rapid strides in their struggle for freedom but freedom is not round the corner yet. We can, at the best, say that we are almost within sight of our goal. We must, therefore, be fully prepared to work for, to suffer for and to sacrifice for our freedom. I would ask my Indian comrades again in Burma to strive shoulder to shoulder with Burmese brethren for freedom as well as for reconstruction of Burma.

There have been very close ties between India and Burma for several centuries, social, cultural and religious. But the strongest tie is the fact that India and Burma are fellow subject nations under the British imperialist yoke. We must fight together for our freedom. On behalf of the Indians, I say that we pledge our full support to the Burmese in their struggle. We realise that we have the full support of the Burmese in our struggle. Shouting Jai Hind and Do Bama we must unitedly march to our cherished goal.

Once again, I thank you all most heartily for your most cordial welcome.



# JAPANESE SOURCES FOR THE STUDY OF THE INDIAN INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT : THE EXAMPLE OF WORLD WAR I\*

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I wish to present to this seminar an examination of both primary and secondary sources in the Japanese language, sources which I believe provide a significant added dimension to the total picture of the Indian independence struggle. However, most of the secondary materials, especially those relative to Rash Behari Bose, have already been referred to in English language published works. Insofar as the Primary materials found in the archives of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs are concerned, these are so voluminous (I myself have surveyed some 26 different volumes) that it seemed most useful to me to show by means of a single, though exceedingly complex, example exactly the kinds of information these documents contain. I have chosen the period of World War I because this was the period during which, between 1905 and 1941, Indian revolutionaries in Japan were most active. Moreover, by virtue of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and Japan's having joined her British ally in the war against Germany, this was the period of the closest liaison between the Japanese and the English relative to Indian revolutionaries in Japan. Thus, the sheer amount of archival material is relatively greater than that for any other comparable or even larger chronological period. In addition, it seemed to me that the data on World War I fit in extremely well with the research of distinguished specialists in the history of Indian revolutionaries abroad such as Professor A. C. Bose whose outstanding studies are well known to me. In this latter regard, may I offer one caveat ? Please understand that I am not a historian of India

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Chairman : Dr. Joyce Lebra.



but rather of Japan. And it is through this latter professional commitment that I developed my interest in Indo-Japanese relations. Therefore, I hope that the material I present here will be considered in that light and that I will be given both correction and guidance from among my Indological colleagues.

The documents in the Foreign Ministry Archives in Tokyo fall into four broad categories : 1) Japanese police reports on the activities, contacts and movements of Indians in Japan with special attention to those in any way suspected of revolutionary sympathies, 2) diplomatic correspondence between British Embassy officials in Tokyo and the Japanese Foreign Office with regard to those same Indians, 3) British intelligence estimates of Indian revolutionaries in Japan (passed on to the Japanese) and 4) translated copies of intercepted mail between and among Indians in Japan and Indians in India, the United States and elsewhere. For the purpose of this paper the information provided represents an amalgam from all of these four classifications, but wherever appropriate I shall try to indicate which of the four is being utilized.

As is well known, Britain's involvement in World War I gave the Indian independence movement new life and new hope. Indians outside India became more active than ever before in behalf of the Indian revolution, and this Indian activism was truly an international phenomenon. Some of its ramifications were soon evident in Japan where the British Embassy, alarmed by intelligence reports from the Government of India of the extent of the cooperation between German agents and Indians overseas, constantly alerted the Japanese government to the presence of "subversive" Indians in Japan. That the Japanese would be relatively responsive to British imprecations had already been demonstrated before the war in the case of Moulana Barkatullah who had been appointed a professor at Tokyo University in 1909. In Tokyo Barkatullah began the publication of a vitriolically anti-British paper (*Islamic Fraternity*) which caused severe protestations from the British Embassy. In response the Japanese Government suppressed the paper in 1912 and in 1914 dismissed Barkatullah who left



for San Francisco and a high post in the militant *Ghadr* (Mutiny) Party.

Nevertheless, despite this cooperative action by the Japanese government, on the eve of the Great War an atmosphere of uneasiness and suspicion characterized the attitude of the Government of India toward Japan. According to a detailed memorandum by Mr. D. Petrie, C.I.E., Indian Criminal Intelligence Department, on Special Duty in the Far East, Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War had made a "profound impression on India," and nationalist literature had urged Indians to emulate the Japanese, especially by freeing themselves from British domination.<sup>1</sup> Thus, despite almost no concrete examples of Japanese interest in Indian nationalism, the combination of certain Indian revolutionaries seeking, by whatever means, sympathy and support from Japan and of the rapid growth of Japanese power in Asia made the British authorities in India extremely nervous about the possibilities of Japanese espionage and intrigue. Further, as Mr. Petrie also noted, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance notwithstanding, there was no doubt, as of Aug. 1914, of the "great and increasing distrust and even dislike of Japan and Japanese methods that (was) almost universally prevalent among Europeans in the Far East."<sup>2</sup> Europeans were antagonized by what seemed to them to be Japanese "arrogance, ambition, aggression and intense self-assertiveness."<sup>3</sup> Analogies between Germany's position in Europe and Japan's in Asia were commonplace and, again quoting Petrie, the average Englishman "feels the Japanese menace in the air, feels it in his blood as he does the day and night or the seasons of the year, and he regards it as something which requires no argument or demonstration, and which is a creed and an article of faith rather than a matter of opinion and debate."<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, as World War I began, three factors interacted insofar as Japan's role in the Indian national movement was concerned: 1) the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 2) the Indian nationalist image of Japan, 3) the growing English fear of Japan.<sup>5</sup> In very short order three additional elements could be



easily perceived : 1) Japan as a key way station on the international "underground railway" of Indian revolutionaries, 2) positive response to the Indian nationalists by a small but often vocal group of Japanese intellectuals and political activists, 3) official Japanese cooperation with the British authorities in order to sustain the profitable access of Japanese traders to the Indian marketplace. In the paragraphs that follow all six of these components should be kept in mind as appearing to varying degrees in the Japanese archival materials being utilized.

Lala Lajpat Rai, who had been deported from India for seditious actions in 1907, showed up in Japan on November 6, 1914 from Canada aboard the Japanese ship *Tenyo Maru*. The Japanese police had Rai, using the alias Jackby, under the closest surveillance from the moment of his arrival until his departure from Nagasaki on November 16 for Hong Kong.<sup>6</sup> The police in Kanagawa-ken (Rai's port of debarkation was Yokohama) heard from crew members of the *Tenyo Maru* that Rai had behaved suspiciously on the ship, haranguing the Indians on board with excited speeches almost everyday. Makino Jo, manager of the *Honolulu Hochi Shimbun* reported that Rai had repeatedly asked whether Japan had gone to war with Germany in accordance with the Anglo-Japanese Alliance or whether Japan had so acted from the standpoint of self-defence and for the sake of peace in the Far East. Rai also had inquired of Makino what Japan's attitude would be in the event of an Indian rebellion against Britain and whether Japan's interests would best be served in such a case by aligning herself with Germany or by adhering to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. Further, Rai was said to have bitterly condemned the British for their treatment of Indians and to have discussed the possibility of a revolutionary uprising in Calcutta the following February.

On the eve of his departure from Nagasaki, Rai made clear to the Japanese police that he knew he was being followed. He angrily asked whether he was being watched because he was an Indian and because of a request by British authorities.



The Japanese inspector calmed Rai somewhat by assuring him that the Japanese police were investigating all foreigners since Japan was at war with Germany. The policeman added that it was also customary for the Japanese police to follow any man of importance, Japanese or foreign, in order to provide special protection for him. Rai then proceeded to lecture the Japanese detective (who reported in detail) on the oppressive rule of India by Britain and described Britain as India's enemy. He warned his Japanese listener that, while Britain might seem friendly to Japan, if Japan did not recognize the long-term British threat, Japan would, in the future, be entrapped and destroyed by an Anglo-American combine. Moreover, urging the Japanese to be very careful of her English ally, Rai, claiming that Indian soldiers were being used on the Western front as human shields to protect British soldiers, "excitedly pounded the table" and denounced the British government.

The archives in this instance do not indicate that the British were given these reports on Lala Lajpat Rai. However, subsequent data indicates that the British were not only fully appraised of Rai's comings and goings to and from Japan (whether by the Japanese or by their own intelligence) but, as Rai suspected, it was frequently the British who provided the Japanese with information on the backgrounds and activities of Indian revolutionaries. For example, in the case of Bhagwan Singh (alias Amar Singh, R. Singh, Ram Singh, Natha Singh, B. S. Jakh, Thakur Singh, Jakh Ji, Bhai Ji, Mr. Jak K. S. Jako), who was viewed by the British as extremely dangerous, it was the British Embassy in Tokyo which first alerted the Japanese government to his arrival and provided a detailed biographical sketch of him.<sup>7</sup> Further, the British Consul in Nagasaki, where Bhagwan Singh landed, provided the local police with information.

A letter of June 29, 1915 marked "Private and Confidential" from the British Embassy to the Japanese Foreign Ministry indicates extreme nervousness on the part of the British who wrote: "It is certain that Bhagwan has left Nagasaki for Tokyo



but it has not yet been possible to discover his address or to trace his movements since his departure.<sup>8</sup> The Japanese replied the next day by enclosing the substance of police reports including the information that Bhagwan Singh was staying with an Indian named "Mozumdar" (S. K. Majumdar, an automobile dealer, later identified as a spy for the British) at 1-4 Yuraku-cho, Kojimachi-ku, Tokyo.<sup>9</sup> Immediately thereafter, in a note of appreciation, the British Embassy asked the Japanese to continue to report since "it is important that the Embassy should not lose sight of Bhagwan Singh."<sup>10</sup>

Subsequent Japanese police reports detail Bhagwan Singh's every move including a meeting with Sun Yat-sen.<sup>11</sup> On July 4 a telegram from the Viceroy of India to the British Ambassador Sir Conyngham Greene asked Greene to ask the Japanese to deport Bhagwan Singh who was described as "pro-German 'in toto' and bitterly anti-English."<sup>12</sup> On July 13 the British Embassy addressed to the Japanese a second letter with regard to the deportation of Bhagwan Singh suggesting that this be done aboard either a Japanese or a British vessel bound for Hong Kong. The British letter also cautioned that Bhagwan Singh knew he was being watched by the police and might try to flee the country. Urging that there be no further delay in the deportation the letter appealed "to the Japanese Government, to whom the Embassy already owe so much for their willing cooperation in connection with this matter .."<sup>13</sup> A second letter of the same date reported to the Japanese that a telegram from England from the Foreign Office sanctioned the deportation request.<sup>14</sup> Again on July 20 prompt action was requested by the British since there was said to be ample evidence of Bhagwan Singh's "dangerous activity in the past, of his seditious tendencies and of his revolutionary associations."<sup>15</sup> This same letter also stressed that since Bhagwan Singh's only purpose in being in Japan was to foment an uprising against Japan's ally, the faster he was deported the better for all concerned.<sup>16</sup>

Nevertheless, no deportation transpired. The documents for the remainder of July, all of August, and the first fifteen



*days of September show that the Japanese continued strict surveillance over Bhagwan Singh. They noted his financial situation, all of his movements, his contacts, both Indian and Japanese, and even his political views. In the latter category Bhagwan Singh seemed disappointed by the failure of China and India to respond positively and revolt immediately while Europe was preoccupied with the war. Since he felt both China and India would benefit from Japanese guidance, he was even more disappointed in Japan's failure to provide that guidance. On September 16 Bhagwan Singh left Tokyo for Shimonoseki and on the 19th left for Korea and on the 22nd was reported to be in Mukden, Manchuria where he was said to be in contact with German spies.<sup>17</sup> During his one day stop-over in Seoul on September 19 Bhagwan Singh had again bemoaned Japan's decision to side with Britain in the Great War. He blamed the pro-English group in the Foreign Ministry and predicted that Japan would eventually find herself surrounded by enemies.<sup>18</sup>*

As the Bhagwan Singh flurry receded, the British Embassy began to concern itself with H.(eramba) L.(al) Gupta who arrived in Yokohama on September 12, 1915 aboard the *S. S. Mongolia*. Describing Gupta as holding revolutionary ideas and as having received money and "seditious publications" from the German Consul in San Francisco, the British Ambassador asked for Gupta's deportation to India or any other British territory.<sup>19</sup> This request was almost immediately followed by one requesting the arrest, with a view to his deportation, of an Indian named P. N. Thakur of 79 Kogai-cho, Azabu, Tokyo.<sup>20</sup> According to the British Embassy documents found on Indian suspects arrested in Singapore en route from Japan as well as letters from Thakur to Abani Nath Mukherjee led the British to conclude that Thakur was really Rash Behari Bose, "a most dangerous criminal."<sup>21</sup> The British also told the Japanese that the Thakur-Bose identity problem could be solved speedily since the third finger on one of Bose's hands had been bent through an injury.<sup>22</sup> If the same deformity existed on Thakur, then obviously Thakur and Bose were one



and the same.<sup>23</sup> On October 8 the Secretariat of the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Headquarters reported to the Foreign Ministry that Thakur was already under surveillance<sup>24</sup> because of his frequent communication with Bhagwan Singh and confirmed that Thakur had "a small scar on the third finger of his left hand."<sup>25</sup>

In the days that followed the Japanese police reports on the movements and contacts of Gupta and Thakur appear in the archives in greater detail and with greater frequency probably in response to the inquiries from the British Embassy. Both Thakur and Gupta were charged with participation in a plot to import arms into India, while Thakur (Bose) was said by the British to be wanted in India for murder and conspiracy to murder, offenses punishable in India under ordinary criminal law.<sup>26</sup> I. M. Tokugawa of the Foreign Ministry responded by stating that it would be difficult for the Japanese to extradite Thakur if he were a political criminal or if evidence were lacking for presuming him to be punishable under Chapter III of Book II of the Japanese Criminal Code.<sup>27</sup>

On October 11 the *Asahi Shimbun* carried an interview with P. N. Thakur under the headline "European War and India." Thakur was very upset that the story suggested that he had some relation with the plot to kill the Viceroy of India. Together with a Japanese acquaintance, a reporter for the *Kokumin Shimbun*, Thakur went to the *Asahi Shimbun* to ask that the report of his having any contact with the murder plot against the Viceroy be retracted and that the *Asahi* henceforward publish material sympathetic to the Indians. The next day, the 12th, Thakur again went to the *Asahi* this time to invite one of the reporters of foreign news to join him and Gupta for lunch. Again Thakur appealed for understanding of the Indian cause.<sup>28</sup>

That same evening at 6 p.m. there was a welcoming party for Lala Lajpat Rai given at the Seiyoken by Kuroiwa Shuroku, Matsuyama Chujiro, Korenami Sadakichi and others. Kuroiwa's address emphasized the need for an Asia for Asians and proclaimed that Japan, as the only independent country



in Asia, had a special responsibility in this regard. He also called for closer Indo-Japanese co-operation. Rai responded by predicting that the war would destroy European ethics from their very foundation and that a worldwide revolution would follow. With this in mind he also urged closer Indo-Japanese cooperation, particularly in the economic field.<sup>29</sup>

Meanwhile, the discussions between the British Embassy and the Foreign Ministry with reference to the possible extradition of Gupta and Thakur continued.<sup>30</sup> Lord Kilmarnock wrote Tokugawa on the 16th that Thakur (Bosc) was not punishable under Chapter 2 (sic) of Book 2 of the Japanese Criminal Code. According to this letter, the warrants for Bose's arrest were issued under Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code,<sup>31</sup> new section 120(b) of the same dealing with conspiracy to murder not yet consummated and certain sections of the Explosives Substances Act of 1908. Therefore, the British requested "deportation under escort" which would avoid the difficulties inherent in extradition proceedings.<sup>32</sup>

Pursuing this proposal, on October 22 a personal handwritten note from the British Ambassador to the Foreign Office suggested that Thakur and Gupta be put aboard the P. and O. steamer *Novara* sailing the next morning at 10 a.m. from Yokohama for Bombay. Sir Conyngham Greene wrote that the ship was commanded by an officer of the Royal Naval Reserve, Captain Hetherington, who could be relied on to "take charge of" the two Indians. The Ambassador urged that the intended deportees be sent to Yokohama by motor or rail during the night or very early in the morning to avoid difficulty, and he also warned that, since the *Novara* made a stop at Kobe, precautions be taken against any communication between the two men and anyone on shore.<sup>33</sup> The same day the Foreign Minister dispatched a short note to Sir Conyngham stating that he had referred the matter to the Home Ministry but that since the Home Minister was absent from Tokyo, it would be impossible to make any decision in time for the sailing of the *Novara*.<sup>34</sup>

That the Japanese were, however, sympathetic to the



British request for deportation becomes apparent from a subsequent letter from the Foreign Ministry to the British Embassy. The British were asked whether Thakur and Gupta were the only Indians they wished to have deported. The Foreign Ministry pointed out that if a favorable decision on the deportation question did emerge after consultation with the Home and Justice Ministries, perhaps the British might wish to have some other Indians such as Lajpat Rai deported as well.<sup>35</sup> Two days later the Embassy replied that "we have not at present such evidence against any other Indians, beyond Thakur, Gupta and of course Bhagwan Singh, as would justify our asking for their deportation."<sup>36</sup> Lord Kilmarnock said that "nothing very definite" was known about Lajpat Rai other than that he had received a "free pardon" from a sentence he had once received from an Indian Court of Law.<sup>37</sup> The substance of this note was that the British believed that these three deportations (Bhagwan Singh had already left Japan) would have "a deterrent effect on the activities of other seditionists who may be in Japan, and that they will not in the future dare to use this country as a base for the furtherance of their designs."<sup>38</sup> Lord Kilmarnock added that this would also make unnecessary any further requests to the Japanese for deportations.<sup>39</sup>

Warmer exchanges between the British Embassy and the Foreign Office and closer surveillance of both Gupta and Thakur (Bose) seemed clear portents that the long discussed deportation was imminent. On November 2 Sir Conyngham Greene wrote to Foreign Minister Ishii, "I therefore wish to express to you my best thanks for the interest which you have taken in this delicate question...I am informing Sir Edward Grey (British Foreign Minister) by telegraph of the successful result of our conversation, and I have added how much I owe to your personal intervention."<sup>40</sup> A secret document of the same date in the Foreign Ministry file listed four suggestions of the British Embassy concerning the deportation of Thakur and Gupta : 1) The two men should be watched closely until they leave, and the shadowing can then be turned over to British authorities



sent from Shanghai or Hong Kong ; 2) There are two British ships, the *Monteagle* and a P. and O. liner, sailing on November 4 and 6 respectively, and the deportees could go on either one ; 3) On being deported it is possible that either man, especially Thakur, might resort to violence, so they should both be thoroughly searched for possible weapons before boarding ship ; 4) All of their papers should be confiscated.<sup>41</sup>

An important snag appeared on November 6. Sir Conyngham Greene in a tone bordering on desperation wrote Foreign Minister Ishii that while the Japanese had intended to send the two Indians either to Shanghai or Hong Kong, "difficulties of a judicial character" would arise if they landed in Shanghai. However, when this was conveyed to the Japanese, the Home Ministry determined that they must be given the chance of going to Shanghai and, moreover, that they were to be given more than the 24 hours advance notice which the British had understood had been agreed upon. The Ambassador expressed the fear that if the views of the Home Ministry prevailed, the whole effect of the deportation of Thakur and Gupta would be nullified.<sup>42</sup> On the 11th Lord Kilmarnock suggested an alternate solution which had occurred to both the Ambassador and to Sir Edward Grey. This was that the ship on which the Indians were to travel be stopped at sea by a British warship and the two men be removed and taken to either Hong Kong or Singapore. If the Japanese government could not agree to this proposal, then Kilmarnock asked that the men be kept in Japan under surveillance rather than be deported to Shanghai.<sup>43</sup>

During the latter half of November Thakur and Gupta, with obvious concern for their fate, were very busy trying to arouse support for themselves from individual influential Japanese and from organs of public opinion. Okawa Shumei, Toyama Mitsuru (whose acquaintance Thakur owed to Sun Yat-sen), Terao Kyo and many others were visited regularly by the two Indians.<sup>44</sup> Among the newspapers they called upon were the *Japan Times*, *Tokyo Nichinichi*, *Asahi*, *Kokumin Shimbun* and *Yamato Shimbun*.<sup>45</sup> At 7 p.m. on November 27 a



party celebrating the coronation of the Taisho Emperor was held, under the sponsorship of the Indian Association of Tokyo, at the Seiyoken in Ueno. The affair, attended by Thakur and Gupta, was presided over by the president of the society, Lala Lajpat Rai. Rai set the tone of the affair by saying, "We, as compatriots and brothers of the Japanese, cannot but show our respect for Japan when we think of the fact that there exists an imperial family continuously for more than 2,600 years."<sup>46</sup> Anesaki Masaharu, distinguished Buddhologist, replied, "Japanese and Indians are the same race of Orientals. I think the chrysanthemum of Japan and the lotus of India have the same meaning. Whatever Christians say, they cannot destroy Oriental Buddhism."<sup>47</sup> Another Japanese, Oshikawa Masayoshi, declaimed: ". Despite the oppression of Christianity, Indians have the spirit to gain independence by cooperation with Japan. This is surely the right of human beings. I hope that the intimate relationship between Japan and India shall be enhanced in the future."<sup>48</sup> The party ended with Rai leading the traditional three cheers for the new emperor. Surely the sentiments expressed by the Japanese present on this occasion must have buoyed the sagging spirits of Thakur and Gupta.

In fact, that very night Foreign Minister Ishii had made known his decision to expel the two Indians. The next morning they were informed by the police that they were to be gone within one week. Although they sought passage to the United States they were told (perhaps by prearrangement) that there was no available ship.<sup>49</sup> The two men also sought help from all their Japanese acquaintances and from the newspapers that they had visited so frequently. The newspapers responded to their plight with attacks on the government, but even the Prime Minister Okuma Shigenobu, who was president of the Japan-India Society, refused to intercede. Two ships were scheduled to depart from Yokohama on December 2, and the two Indians were told they could board either one. An arrangement had been made between the British and French Ambassadors that if the men chose to leave Japan aboard the French ship *Polynesien*, the captain was to be told to give the British



warship *Atlas* a free hand to remove Thakur and Gupta.<sup>50</sup> After a meeting with reporters at the Imperial Hotel on the afternoon of December 1, the two deportees-to-be went to call on Toyama Mitsuru once more, and it was the following day before the Japanese police realized that they had been hoodwinked by the "escape" of the Indian revolutionaries.

The story of the so-called Nakamura Affair is too well known to need repeating here. Of greater interest to this presentation are the reactions to it and the consequences of it. Public opinion in Japan seemed to respond most favorably to the Indians' evasion of the expulsion order. Seiyukai and Kokuminto Diet members joined to attack the government for its attitude in the matter, especially for treating Bose and Gupta as common criminals.<sup>51</sup> In this latter regard the Foreign Ministry asked the British Embassy for help in bolstering the government's case in the forthcoming Diet interpellation. Mr. Tokugawa, for example, asked for more information about 1) from where in India they came, 2) what their original occupation was, 3) where Thakur was before coming to Japan, 4) other significant antecedents, if any, 5) additional data about Gupta's connections with the Germans.<sup>52</sup> On December 13 the British Embassy replied to these questions with special emphasis on Gupta's connections with the Germans and Thakur's absconding from the Indian police.<sup>53</sup>

For the first month of 1916, after the disappearance of Bose and Gupta, the archives seem to show a preoccupation of the British Embassy with the interception and translation of letters from and to Indians in Japan. Apparently the writers of these letters knew they were being read because not only did the letters rarely contain any information of any importance (other than reflecting the desperate financial straights of the Indian revolutionaries), but they were written in a variety of languages, e.g., Urdu, Bengali, Gurmukhi, Gujarati, which made their translation difficult and time-consuming. Moreover, most of the letters referred to individuals by aliases or special Indian nicknames which seemed to confound the British to a great extent. For example, at first the British thought that



“Pandit Ji” was Lala Lajpat Rai, but they then decided that both “Mr. Ramsay” and “Pandit Ji” were aliases for Ram Chand, editor of the *Ghadr*, a radical revolutionary newspaper published in San Francisco.<sup>54</sup>

On May 20, 1916 Mr. Tokugawa wrote Mr. Norman of the British Embassy that one of the Indians whose letters had been opened had protested, and, while the postal authorities had denied any tampering with the mails, the Japanese had now decided to terminate the interception of letters.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, the Japanese Foreign Ministry spokesman rejected out of hand what he understood as a British suggestion to suppress correspondence to and from Indians.<sup>56</sup> Norman replied with obvious disappointment both at the decision no longer to intercept the correspondence of Indians in Japan and at the misunderstanding of a British request to suppress a single letter.<sup>57</sup> In the latter case a letter dated March 4 had aroused suspicion on the part of the recipient since it was post-marked March 22!<sup>58</sup> Accordingly, the British view had been that suppression might be advisable in this particular case. There had never been any intention to suppress all Indian correspondence. Mr. Norman also opined that despite the short time the interception system had been in operation it had “yielded useful results”, and he found it “unfortunate” that the scheme was not to be continued.<sup>59</sup>

The British Embassy next turned its attention, as usual at the behest of the Government of India, to two other matters. Apparently all Japanese steamship lines had been instructed not to issue tickets to any British Indians who were either lacking passports or whose passports had not been endorsed by a British consular officer in Japan. Mr. Norman protested vehemently that he had discovered cases, the Osaka Shosen Kaisha in particular, where these instructions had not been observed. Norman stated that he was extremely disturbed because it was so important “to neglect no means of controlling the Indian danger, which is difficult enough to deal with at the best ..”<sup>60</sup>

The other matter which seemed to exercise the British Embassy was the entry into Japan of so-called pro-German news-



papers containing material derogatory of the British control of India. Of particular concern to the Embassy were the *Tientsin Sunday Times* mailed from China and *Ghadr* in Urdu and Gurmukhi mailed from the United States.<sup>61</sup> On September 19 the British also asked to have the *Deutsche Wacht* of Surabaya and the *Umschau* of Bangkok banned from the Japanese mails.<sup>62</sup> It seemed to the British that the Japanese could have been firmer in their efforts to control the importation of literature "intended to harm the Allied cause."<sup>63</sup> The Embassy spokesman urged that the Japanese flatly prohibit the importation into Japan of the publications in question, for they would then have the right to ask the United States Government (the source of *Ghadr* was San Francisco) under Article XVI, Paragraph 3 of the Rome Postal Convention of May 26, 1906 to prohibit the sending of such literature by mail to Japan.<sup>64</sup>

Clearly the British Embassy staff, prodded by the viceregal government in India and undoubtedly affected by the growing general British unease about Japan, were dissatisfied with the Japanese government's efforts to curb Indian revolutionaries in Japan. The problems of mail interception and of subversive literature paled by comparison with the failure of Japan to respond favorably and with dispatch to requests for the deportation of Bhagwan Singh, Thakur and Gupta. In a very direct letter to Shidehara Kijuro of the Foreign Office, Mr. Norman opined that "Indians are gradually learning to regard Japan as one of the countries where they can come and go as they please and organize unmolested their conspiracies against British rule in India."<sup>65</sup> Norman said that he was sure that every Indian in Japan knew of the efforts of the British to have Bhagwan Singh, Thakur and Gupta deported and of the complete failure of those efforts. He was certain too that other revolutionaries had been encouraged accordingly and that further plots could be anticipated in Japan in the future. Since this was, in his view, the situation and since the Japanese government seemed to feel legally limited in its authority to take preventive action. Norman contended that the least the Japanese



could do would be to keep the British Embassy fully informed. This could only be done, he said, by a resumption of the former practice of mail interception, and he felt sure that sufficient time had now elapsed so that it could be revived without arousing the suspicion of the Indians. Such suspicion could also be mitigated by greater care in the handling of such mail and by much greater brevity in the amount of time a letter would be held back. Finally, Norman appealed to Mr. Shidehara as one diplomat to another, intimating what catastrophic embarrassment would befall the Embassy in Tokyo should indeed a plot against British India develop in Japan and be carried out without any warning from the Embassy staff.<sup>66</sup> Perhaps in response to this plea, on September 22 Shidehara wrote Norman that the Japanese Government had decided to resume mail interception. Ambassador Greene was, in turn, reported to be extremely gratified at this latest development.<sup>67</sup>

On September 16, 1916 Japanese initiative was evidenced in a letter from Tokugawa to Norman informing the latter of a report from the Japanese Consul-General in San Francisco that Taraknath Das, "a suspicious Indian," had left there for Japan on August 26. Tokugawa said that Das had been under surveillance since his arrival in Yokohama on September 10 and was staying at the Imperial Hotel where he had registered as a naturalized American.<sup>68</sup> Norman immediately replied appreciatively and urged the Japanese to keep him fully informed.<sup>69</sup> A week later in another letter Norman described Das as "one of the most dangerous of seditionists .."<sup>70</sup>

During his stay at the Imperial Hotel, Taraknath Das identified himself as an American, saying that he had lived in the United States for eleven years. He described himself also as a scholar who had studied political science and economics at Columbia University and had been a professor in the same field at the University of Washington. Das said that he hoped to save India by improving relations among India, China and Japan, and to that end he had come to see for himself the actual conditions in Japan and China. During his stay in Tokyo, he had interviews with Inukai Tsuyoshi and with Prime



Minister Okuma. It was further reported that Das's trip was being paid for by contributions collected from anti-British Indians. On September 27 Das left Tokyo station bound for Peking.<sup>71</sup>

On March 27, 1917 Taraknath Das left Shanghai aboard the *Hakwai Maru* ostensibly en route back to the United States. The British Embassy at once alerted the Japanese authorities to establish surveillance of Das from the moment of his landing in Japan until his departure. Norman again described Das as "one of the most important and dangerous Indian seditionists and a close associate of (C.K.) Chakravarty and (H.L.) Gupta" who had just been apprehended on conspiracy charges in New York.<sup>72</sup> On April 13 Norman added that Das left the *Hakwai Maru* at Nagasaki and received from the steamship company a ticket for Tokyo where he was to stay with a Waseda professor, Nagai Ryutaro.<sup>73</sup> In fact, when Das was traced in Tokyo he was found to be staying at the Kikufuji Hotel, 82, Kikuzaka-cho, Hongo.<sup>74</sup>

Mr. Norman continued to be concerned about Das's attempt to influence public opinion in Japan against the allies and in favor of Germany. Norman mentioned as especially noxious a pamphlet written by Das in English and entitled *Is Japan A Menace to Asia ?* which was on sale for one yen at Maruzen bookstore.<sup>75</sup> For their part the Japanese police reported that Das, as had been true during his stay in China, was spending most of his time in trying to collect money to support himself.<sup>76</sup> Apparently in part because of a lack of funds and in part because of possible fear of arrest in the United States, Das seemed to have decided to remain in Japan by taking a house at Yushima, Tenjin-cho, 3 chome, 1 banchi, also in Hongo ward.<sup>77</sup> Norman found this a particularly ominous sign since he wrote to the Japanese Foreign Ministry :

"Now that the United States Government have decided to take energetic action against these people, Japan will remain the only country where Indian seditionists can hatch their plots secure from interference and you must therefore, I think, be prepared for a considerable increase both in their numbers and in their activity in this country."<sup>78</sup>



On May 1 Tokugawa wrote Mr. Norman that the Ministry of Communications had agreed to intercept Das's mail.<sup>79</sup>

On May 28 Das tried to move to Ueno, but decided he could not because of the high rent of 50 yen per month.<sup>80</sup> Meanwhile, the people he saw were his countrymen Kesho Ram Sabarwal, Sato Bobi and Hari Prasad Shastri and two American women, Chadbourne and LaMotte.<sup>81</sup> Das received letters from Okawa Shumei, Nagai Ryutaro, Kanokogi Kazunobu, philosophy instructor at Keio University, and Yoshino Sakuzo.<sup>82</sup> The Japanese monthly magazine *Nippon oyobi Nipponjin* (Japan and the Japanese) published a Japanese translation of Das's *Is Japan A Menace to Asia ?* in its June issue.<sup>83</sup> Also, in connection with his writing Das was in contact with the Dai Nipponsha publishing house and with Tokutomi Iichiro, chief editor and president of the *Kokumin Shimbun*, who had contributed an appendix to *Is Japan A Menace to Asia ?*.<sup>84</sup> In mid-June it was confirmed by Mr. Tokugawa that Das was in fact responsible for distributing in Japan a leaflet entitled *Japan's Greatest Mistake* by one Soong Tsung Faung, Professor of Modern Languages and Literature at St. John's University, Shanghai.<sup>85</sup> This piece condemned Japan for siding with Britain in the war instead of pursuing a policy of "Asia for the Asians" and vitriolically attacked England.<sup>86</sup> Tokugawa assured Norman that further circulation of this leaflet was to be prevented.<sup>87</sup>

Apparently Das was also rather desperately jobhunting. The Japanese police reported him as saying that he had applied for a job at Waseda University.<sup>88</sup> and an intercepted letter from "The Government University" in Peking indicated Das had been turned down after applying on May 28 for a position in the Political Science Department.<sup>89</sup> Das's purposes in this attempt to secure employment seem to have been twofold, namely to earn some money and to avoid having to return to the United States. Das was also about to have another piece of his writing published, this time in Okawa Shumei's name. The volume was to be entitled *Isolation of Japan Among the Nations*.<sup>90</sup> It is interesting to see how cooperative the



Japanese Foreign Ministry seems to have been in keeping the British Embassy fully informed on these and related matters. One finds intercepted letters, forwarded voluntarily by the Japanese to the British Embassy which not only condemned Great Britain but often were harshly critical of the Japanese government and its motives as well. For example, the Foreign Ministry forwarded a copy of an intercepted letter from the Japanese Consul at Los Angeles to Das, and this letter thanked him profusely for having sent the Consul a copy of *Is Japan A Menace to Asia?* and praised Das for “dispelling certain wrong impressions heretofore prevailing among the Occidental people”!<sup>91</sup>

In late June Mr. Tokugawa had asked the British Embassy to forward to it translations of the correspondence the Japanese had intercepted since resuming that practice. On August 2, with seeming relish, Mr. Norman sent a number of these translations plus the translations of “a number of further letters which have come into the possession of the British authorities from other sources but which, nevertheless, will be of interest to the Imperial Government.”<sup>92</sup> Norman contended that all these letters, as the Embassy had so often pointed out in the past, showed conclusively that “Japanese territory has been and continues to be, used as a base for the organization of revolutionary plots against India and that most of the persons mentioned are implicated in these plots and have been in active cooperation with the German enemies of both our countries.”<sup>93</sup> Enclosed were translations of 24 letters with appended notes identifying each person mentioned and stressing their respective ties to the Indian revolutionary movement and to the German enemy.<sup>94</sup>

The first two letters were written by “Martine” and “Narendra”, both aliases for M.N. Roy who was also known as J. White and Narendra Bhattacharji. Both of these letters were said by the British to show German complicity in the Indian revolutionary plot as well as German financing. In these letters, too, despite his continuing to live in hiding, Thakur (Bose) was seen as the key to the Japanese end of the Indian revolutionary



activity. The next five letters were all written to Kesho Ram Sabarwal and were principally concerned with money and reflected the often cruel intrusion of money matters into serious revolutionary concerns. One letter, in particular, from Vashnu Das Bagai, a curio dealer in Berkeley California read :

I hear that Mr. Taraknath is now in Japan. I wish to tell something about him. This gentleman is *not trustworthy* in money matters. He talks very learnedly and may convince you, but you must be careful with him in money matters. He is well-known in California and Europe for his unreliability in money matters. He is an American citizen and an M.A., but as far as honesty is concerned he is unstable like a rolling egg.

There followed translations of three letters to Taraknath Das. Two of these from Surendranath Karr, a well-known activist in the United States, indicated that both he and Das were pre-occupied with money problems, and, in fact, each seemed to want money from the other. Another letter from Bagai to Sabarwal, after several paragraphs seeking to convince Sabarwal of the futility of his staying in Japan, urged him to come to the United States but not without "at least \$1000 with you." And in all the letters that follow, while the British footnotes identify the aliases of Bose, Bhagwan Singh, Lajpat Rai et. al, what continues to stand out is the repeated discussion of money ! Some of the figures mentioned include \$2000, \$500, \$300, \$200, Y2000 as well as several references to checks for unspecified amounts. There is even a despairing comment on a Bengali named M.G. Guha, from Chittagong, who had absconded with Y3000. So, while Mr. Norman felt he was passing on information of great moment to the Japanese, one is forced to wonder if the Japanese might not have felt baffled by self-styled political revolutionaries whose every waking moment seemed to be consumed with problems of money.

On July 31, 1917 in a letter to Baron Goto, the Home Minister, Taraknath Das announced he had decided to go back to America to face the charges growing out of the San Francisco conspiracy trial.<sup>94a</sup> The United States Government had, in view of the charges, agreed to foot Das's ticket back to the



States. According to a Home Ministry document, there had seemingly been some consideration given by the Japanese to the deportation of Das, for, when news of his voluntary departure planned for August 7 was received, the Home Ministry decided to remain completely out of the picture. Das would be leaving Japan, then, of his own volition.<sup>95</sup>

At 6-30 p.m. August 5 there was a farewell party for Das at the Seiyoken attended by some fifteen persons including Okawa Shumei, Uehara Etsujiro and Nakano Seigo. Das spoke to the group of his commitment to Indian independence and of his belief that this could only be achieved when there was true cooperation among Japan, China and India. He bade farewell to his good friends saying that his return to an uncertain fate in America was a direct result of the hostile attitude toward him of the Japanese government.<sup>96</sup> The Japanese police followed Das right down to his embarkation at 3 p.m. August 8 aboard the *Siberia Maru* for San Francisco. Interestingly Das's American passport had been withheld until he boarded the ship and was then turned over to him by the Japanese authorities.<sup>97</sup> The British Embassy was duly informed of these arrangements and of Taraknath Das's departure.<sup>98</sup>

When Das arrived in San Francisco, he was interviewed by a local Japanese language newspaper, the *Shin Sekai* (New World).<sup>99</sup> It was reported that Das understood Japanese and was very jovial "which seems to be rare among Indians." He said, "Politics is my life. I like politics better than anything else." Das recounted his untiring efforts for Indian independence saying, "I believe that the Orient should be ruled by Orientals, and to that end first of all the Westerners must be expelled." In this latter regard he called on Japan for guidance and assistance, and he repeated his frequently repeated call for Japan-China-India cooperation. Das recalled with obvious pleasure his meetings with such personalities as Inukai Tsuyoshi and Uehara Etsujiro but regretted his inability to have *Is Japan A Menace to Asia?* published in Japan. Das also noted that he had become accustomed to oppression because he considered "the Indian Revolution as my life." Interestingly,



while the article concluded by noting that Das maintained that his own philosophy was anti-German, anti-British and pro-Asian, it was also stated that there were reports that Das was a spy for the British Government. As far as the present paper is concerned, this was the first intimation of such a possibility.

In early September Mr. Norman sent Tokugawa a detailed account full of "very confidential information" regarding the pending prosecution in the United States of Germans, German-Americans and Indians charged with using American territory to plan a military expedition against India and Burma. Mr. Norman had underlined in red the names of all those among the accused who had visited Japan, resided in Japan or were still residing there. Norman's point was obviously that, as the British Embassy had contended all along, these individuals had conspired with the Germans to bring about a German victory. Among those so identified were Moulana Barkatullah, Bhagwan Singh, Rash Behari Bose, Kesho Ram Sabarwal, Taraknath Das, Heramba Lal Gupta and Mahendra Nath Roy.<sup>100</sup> Mr. Tokugawa very politely thanked Mr. Norman for the information in his letter and promised to "carefully examine all those papers..."<sup>101</sup>

After having received through the Japanese a number of intercepted letters since the fall of 1917, the British Embassy was clearly disappointed with the results. In mid-January, 1918 Mr. Norman wrote to the Foreign Office that the letters of the Indian revolutionaries "of which you are so kind as to send us photographs from time to time are hardly ever of any interest or importance."<sup>102</sup> He went on to suggest two reasons for this : first, the intercepted letters were always letters to Indians in Japan and never letters written by them and second, the Indians being fully aware of the measures taken to intercept their mail, had undoubtedly made arrangements for all "compromising letters to be sent to the address of some friendly Japanese."<sup>103</sup> Mr. Norman further commented that the Japanese Foreign Ministry had asked the British to supply them with any such suspect addresses. However, this request



seemed rather odd, he said, since the full resources of the Japanese police were at the disposal of the Foreign Ministry, and the British Embassy was only in a position to secure such information by chance. Norman, therefore, urged the Japanese to exercise more vigilance and thoroughness in intercepting mail and in uncovering Japanese mail drops.<sup>104</sup> For my own part, after reading through all of the hundreds of intercepted letters, one wonders what the British hoped to discover in them. Most of them seem intensely personal, as most letters are, even those written by revolutionaries. Thus, family matters, personal relationships and money problems predominate in the contents of the intercepted letters, and minimal political information surfaces, none of it of very great moment.

Neither the successful prosecution of the Hindu Conspiracy Trial by the United States nor the end of the war lessened British pressure on the Japanese with regard to Indian revolutionaries. For example, a long confidential memorandum detailed every single reference to Japan that had come out in the proceedings at San Francisco.<sup>105</sup> Accordingly, the memorandum warned : "Japan appears again and again throughout the case as a centre of activity of the Hindu conspirators and one of their most important bases of operation."<sup>106</sup> Many instances from the oral record are cited in the document. Of special interest to the Japanese should have been the record of C. K. Chakravarty who, with German money, had been directing from America conspiratorial activities in Japan. In addition to his having organized such front organizations as the Pan-Asiatic Society and the Oriental Society, Chakravarty had met with directors of two newspapers, *Yamato Shimbun* (Tokyo) and *Chinai Dempo* (Kyoto) to support Indian independence. May 2, 1916 he reported to Berlin :

It would not be necessary to buy off these papers as they understand it is to mutual interest, but they ask for certain consideration to help their financial status. They are also decided to attack Anglo-Japanese treaty as antagonistic to national interest.<sup>107</sup>

Clearly this latter reference was especially unsettling to the British Embassy in Tokyo.



Another British memorandum dated February, 1919 charged that there were numerous instances "in which the Japanese government have failed to keep their undertaking to suppress seditious proceedings or have carried out those undertakings in such a manner as to defeat the object in view."<sup>108</sup> Ineffective censorship and failure to carry out deportations were cited as prime examples.<sup>109</sup> So were the continued circulation in Japan of the newspaper *Ghadr* and of *Ajia Jiron* (Asian Review) a monthly journal sponsored by the Kokuryukai (Amur River or Black Dragon Society). The tone of the note was both critical and insistent and reflected, after the end of hostilities, a degree of frustration and disappointment not evident in any earlier document.

In a perceptive secret report to the Foreign Minister, the Japanese Consul General at Calcutta tried to analyze the British concerns expressed in the Feb., 1919 memorandum.<sup>110</sup> The Consul General began by recognizing the difficult problem posed for Japan in the light of its internal politics by British requests for the deportation of Indian political exiles. He opined that if the Japanese were unresponsive to British demands, it would increase the sympathy for Indian revolutionary plots both in and out of the Japanese government. Therefore, he continued, it was better for Japan to use every legal means to prevent Indians from using Japan as a base of operations. The Consul General described the British Ambassador's February memorandum as instigated "without any doubt" by the Government of India which had an extremely uneasy attitude about the Japanese government's real feelings toward Indian revolutionaries. He argued that while it would be simple to dismiss the Government of India's dissatisfaction as based on "presumptuous doubt," it would be self-deluding for the Japanese since the Government of India's fears had a certain basis in fact. Thus, it would be practically impossible, he wrote, to make the Government of India understand Japan's positions through words, however beautiful and however many times they might be reiterated. Deeds, not words, were needed if the Government of India were to be convinced of Japan's sincere desire



to cooperate. In this context the Consul General praised the action of the Japanese authorities in June, 1919 in refusing to allow Ranjit Singh Jain, an Indian revolutionary agitator, to land on Japanese soil during a stopover of his ship en route from the United States to India.<sup>111</sup> Only by continuing such cooperative action could the Government of India perhaps be ultimately convinced of the sincerity of the Japanese government.

The Consul General then proceeded to discuss at some length all the inconveniences and unpleasantnesses experienced by Japanese travelling in India. "It is just like travelling in enemy territory," he said. In the case of travel by train policemen and detectives were posted at every major railroad station and intentionally sought out any Japanese passengers. Once a Japanese was discovered, he was immediately interrogated about his name, occupation, destination and purpose of travel. If all his answers were not absolutely precise, either a detective might be assigned to accompany him or he might be told to report to the police at his point of destination for further questioning. Rudeness, and brash, public rudeness at that, was the hallmark of the treatment of Japanese travellers in India, even diplomats.

As unpleasant as all this was, the Consul General was sure that the intense surveillance of Japanese in India was a direct reaction to the nervousness of the Government of India about the seeming sanctuary which Rash Behari Bose and others had found in Japan. The Consul General concluded his report by saying that if, as he hoped, the Japanese government took the necessary steps to rectify the concerns of the Government of India, he was sure that all the maltreatment which Japanese in India had been experiencing would be mitigated at once. Accordingly, the Consul General concluded by saying, "I eagerly hope that the imperial government will give deep considerations in this direction."<sup>112</sup>

Clearly, the conclusion of the Consul General of Japan in Calcutta that the constant representations and pressures of the British Embassy in Tokyo were a direct result of representa-



tions to and pressures on the Embassy from the Government of India was an accurate one. The Embassy personnel recognized that the overall record of cooperation, given the peculiar difficulties of internal Japanese politics, on the part of the Japanese Foreign Ministry was a good one. They recognized that Japan was a British ally and not a British puppet and therefore could neither respond nor act in every instance with the immediacy which the Government of India constantly desired. Nor was Japan a totalitarian state, and its internal laws and regulations had to be respected by foreigners as well as by Japanese citizens. Thus, for example, the Embassy in Tokyo knew that the Japanese were perfectly within their rights in inquiring whether Rash Behari Bose or H. L. Gupta were "criminals" or not in the definition of Indian law or were equally justified in pointing out that it was at least questionable to ask the Japanese to ban from the mails the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* or the *Modern Review* when both were circulating legally in India.

Moreover, the British Embassy in Tokyo, like the Japanese government, was not really that worried about Indian revolutionary activity in Japan. Excellent British intelligence together with thoroughgoing Japanese police work combined to provide an almost hour to hour picture of all suspect Indians in Japan. In addition, among the Indians themselves there were regularly reporting paid informers. Therefore, despite certain bombastically articulated anti-British diatribes, few knowledgeable British personnel in Japan saw the whole Indian scene in Japan as little more than a nuisance. Similarly, all things considered, Japanese response to the pleas for help of Indian revolutionaries was extremely minimal. The few Japanese who did offer help to Indian political activists were themselves either lacking in political clout or, unfortunately for the Indians involved, using them to embarrass the government in power. In this latter regard, the Indian problem was a convenient foil for those Japanese whose real target was the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and whose implicit aim was to terminate any vestige of Japanese interdependence on the so-called Anglo-Saxon powers.



A certain preverse mutuality was operative here between those in Japan who wished to affect negatively British-Japanese relations and those in the Government of India whose deeply rooted suspicions of Japan and the Japanese ultimately worked to the same end. As indicated at the outset of this paper, distrust and dislike of the Japanese were prevalent attitudes among the British, despite the Alliance. These feelings combined with the increasing paranoia about the probability of the existence of some sort of Japanese Pan-Asian "grand design" directed at India made the British authorities on the subcontinent especially edgy. In turn, as the archives described here have shown, the British Embassy in Tokyo, representing the Government of India, worked ceaselessly to alert the Japanese government to British Indian concerns, and, all things considered, the Japanese authorities responded with surprising equanimity and with an impressive degree of cooperation. Accordingly, during World War I, despite the hullabaloo to the contrary, Indian revolutionary activities in Japan never assumed serious proportions.



## References:

1. India Office Library No. L/P+S/18/D. 237, Secret, Shanghai, April 3, 1918, 34.
2. *Op. cit.*, 36.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Op. cit.*, 37.
5. From a perusal of the documents of the period, one would assume that this "fear" was far greater among officials of the Government of India than among personnel of the British Embassy in Tokyo. The latter often seemed embarrassed by the constant petty inquiries directed to the Japanese Foreign Ministry, but the embassy staff felt obligated to relay questions which had come from India in the first place.
6. The details that follow are from Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs (hereafter "JMFA") 4. 3. 1. 17, Nov. 9-16. Very Secret
7. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, "Bhagwan Singh's Antecedents," British Embassy, Tokyo, June 23, 1915. Secret.
8. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from British Embassy, Tokyo, June 29, 1915 Private and Confidential.
9. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from Japanese Foreign Ministry to British Embassy, June 30, 1915. Confidential and private. Bhagwan Singh later moved to Miharashi-kan, Nogizaka, Akasaka-ku.
10. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from British Embassy, Tokyo, July 1, 1915. Private and confidential.
11. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, July 1 and 2, July 12-15, 1915. Secret. Bhagwan Singh frequented the Cafe Manhattan, the Hibiya Library and the movies.
12. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Telegram relayed by British Embassy, Tokyo, July 5, 1915.
13. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from British Embassy, Tokyo, July 13, 1915. Private and confidential.
14. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from British Embassy, Tokyo, July 13, 1915. Private and confidential. Pressing.
15. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from British Embassy, Tokyo, July 20, 1915. Private and confidential.
16. *Ibid.*
17. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter to the British Ambassador, September 28, 1915. Private and confidential.
18. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, September 30, 1915. Secret.
19. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Memorandum to the Japanese Foreign Office from the British Embassy, Tokyo, Oct. 1, 1915.
20. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Memorandum from the British Embassy, Oct. 5, 1915.
21. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Memorandum from the British Embassy, Tokyo,



Oct. 8, 1915. The British Embassy also described Bose as an "absconding criminal."

22. According to the British Embassy, in Feb., 1914 Bose's hand had been caught in the window of a railway carriage. (JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Memorandum from the British Embassy, Tokyo, Oct. 8, 1915).
23. *Ibid.*
24. P. N. Thakur had arrived in Japan May 12, 1915.
25. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Oct. 8, 1915.
26. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Memorandum from the British Embassy, Tokyo, Oct. 12, 1915.
27. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter of I. M. Tokugawa to Lord Kilmarnock, Oct. 13, 1915.
28. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Oct. 13, 1915.
29. *Ibid.*
30. Interesting descriptions of Gupta and Thakur were provided to the Foreign Ministry by the Tokyo Metropolitan Police.

Heramba L. Gupta

Age : 30.	Height : 5'6"
Face long.	Eyes : large, round and sharp
Nose high (sharp).	Mouth : large.
Ears : large.	Hair : long
Beard and moustache : none.	Eyebrows : thick and close together between the eyes.
Physique: skinny (anaemic) (For an Indian he has rather white skin).	Hat : black and wide brimmed.
Clothes : black Western.	

N. Thakur

Age : 30	Clothes : double breasted black suit
Complexion : brown (characteristic for Indians).	Eyebrows : short with bushy eyebrows.
Eyes : round with bulging eyeballs.	Shoes : black or brown lace-up boots.
Nose : high and large.	Hat : black.
Physique : rather heavy.	Special characteristic : gold framed spectacles for near-sightedness.

(JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Oct. 20, 1915)

31. Article 302 of the Indian Criminal Code read :  
"Whoever commits murder shall be punished with death, or transportation for life, and shall also be liable to fine."
32. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from Lord Kilmarnock to Mr. Tokugawa. Oct. 16, 1915. Confidential.



33. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from British Ambassador, Tokyo to the Foreign Minister Ishii, October 22, 1915. Private.
34. JMFA 4. 31. 1. 17, Letter of Foreign Minister Ishii to the British Ambassador, Tokyo, October 22, 1915.
35. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from I. M. Tokugawa to Lord Kilmarnock, October 27, 1915.
36. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from Lord Kilmarnock to I. M. Tokugawa, October 29, 1915. Secret.
37. *Ibid.*
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Ibid.*
40. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from Sir Conyngham Greene to Foreign Minister Ishii, November 2, 1915. Private.
41. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, November 2, 1915. Secret.
42. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter of Sir Conyngham Greene to Foreign Minister Ishii Kikujiro, November 6, 1915. Private.
43. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from Lord Kilmarnock to I. M. Tokugawa, November 11 1915. Private and Confidential
44. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, November 15, 16, 18, 24, 26, 1915.
45. *Ibid.*
46. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, November 27, 1915. Rai himself left Japan for the United States on December 11, 1915. (JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, December 11, 1915).
47. *Ibid.*
48. *Ibid.*
49. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, November 29, 1915.
50. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from the British Embassy, Tokyo to the Japanese Foreign Office, November 27, 1915.
51. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, December 3, 1915. Secret. The British were very disappointed by the failure of the deportation proceedings to transpire. (JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from British Embassy to Japanese Foreign Ministry, December 8, 1915. Very confidential).
52. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from I. M. Tokugawa to British Embassy, Tokyo, December 3, 1915.
53. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from British Embassy, Tokyo, to I. M. Tokugawa, December 13, 1915. Very confidential.
54. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from British Embassy, Tokyo, to Japanese Foreign Ministry, March 7, 1916 and letter from British Embassy, Tokyo to Japanese Foreign Ministry, March 23, 1916. Private and Confidential.
55. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from I. M. Tokugawa to Mr. Norman, British Embassy, Tokyo, May 20, 1916.
56. *Ibid.*



57. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from H. Norman to Mr. Tokugawa, Japanese Foreign Ministry, May 22, 1916. Private and Confidential.
58. *Ibid.*
59. *Ibid.*
60. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from H. Norman, British Embassy, Tokyo, September 5, 1916 to Mr. Shidehara, Japanese Foreign Ministry. Private and Confidential.
61. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from Sir Conyngham Greene to Mr. Shidehara, July 17, 1916. Private. and Letter from H. Norman to Mr Shidehara, July 28, 1916.
62. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from H. Norman to Mr. Tokugawa, September 19, 1916. Private.
63. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from H. Norman to Mr. Tokugawa, February 20, 1917. Private and Confidential.
64. *Ibid.*
65. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from H. Norman to Mr. Shidehara, September 1, 1916. Private and Confidential.
66. *Ibid.*
67. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from H. Norman to Mr. Shidehara, September 28, 1916. Private and Confidential. On October 9 Norman sent Tokugawa translations of two letters in Urdu which were the first to be made available since reverting to the mail interception system and Norman observed. "...unluckily neither of them is very helpful." (JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from H. Norman to Mr. Tokugawa, October 9, 1916. Private and confidential.) By December 27, the British Embassy was agreeable to the cessation of this arrangement "considering the uninteresting character of almost all the letters" seen since the resumption of interception and the suspicion that the Indians were carrying on their correspondence through some friendly Japanese, *e.g.*, Okawa Shumei. (JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from H. Norman to Mr. Tokugawa, December 27, 1916. Private and Confidential; letter from I. M. Tokugawa to Mr. Norman, December 27, 1916. Private and Confidential; letter from H. Norman to Mr. Tokugawa, March 23, 1917.)
68. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from I. M. Tokugawa to Mr. Norman, September 16, 1916.
69. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from H. Norman to Mr. Tokugawa, September 19, 1916. Private and Confidential.
70. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from H. Norman to Mr. Shidehara, September 26, 1916. Private and Confidential.
71. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, September 16, 22, 26, 27, 1916.
72. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from H. Norman to Mr. Tokugawa, March 31, 1917. Private and Confidential.



73. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from H. Norman to Mr. Tokugawa, April 3, 1917. Private and Confidential.
74. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from H. Norman to Mr. Tokugawa, April 1, 1917. Private and Confidential.
75. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from H. Norman to Mr. Tokugawa, April 13, 1917. Private and Confidential. Mr. Tokugawa later reported that the sale of Das's book had been prohibited. (JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17. Letter from I. M. Tokugawa to Mr. Norman, June 13, 1917. Private and Confidential).
76. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, April 18, 1917. In this regard Das was said to be particularly close with two American ladies named Mrs. Chadbourne and Miss LaMotte.
77. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from H. Norman to Mr. Tokugawa, April 26, 1917. Private and Confidential.
78. *Ibid*
79. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from I. M. Tokugawa to Mr. Norman, May 1, 1917
80. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, June 7, 1917. In early May Das had been estimated by the Japanese police to have between 300 and 400 yen (JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, May 7, 1917).
81. *Ibid*.
82. *Ibid*.
83. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, June 8, 1917
84. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, June 12 and 13, 1917.
85. JMFA 4.3.1. 17, Letter from I. M. Tokugawa to Mr. Norman, June 17, 1917. Private and Confidential. A detailed note from the British Embassy on Soong disclosed that he had, in fact, been released from St. John's University because of "unsatisfactory moral character" and was at Tsing Wha College, Peking. Soong had studied in Geneva and Germany for seven years and was special correspondent in China for the *Tribune of Geneva*. (JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from H. Norman to Mr. Tokugawa, July 28, 1917. Private and Confidential. Enclosure.)
86. *Ibid*
87. *Ibid*.
88. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, June 18, 1917. Taraknath Das seems to have been an acquaintance of Abe Iso, the well known liberal Christian professor at Waseda. (JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from Yoshikazu Hirai to Das, April 29, 1917).
89. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from I. M. Tokugawa to Mr. Norman, June 19, 1917. Private and Confidential. Enclosure.
90. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, June 28, 1917.
91. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Copy of Letter from Consul U. Oyama to Das, April 26, 1917.



92. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from H. Norman to Mr. Tokugawa, August 2, 1917. Private and Very Confidential. Stamped "Top Secret" in Japanese.
93. *Ibid.*
94. *Ibid.* Enclosure.
- 94a. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from Taraknath Das to Baron Goto, July 31, 1917.
95. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, August 3, 1917.
96. Details are found in JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, August 6, 1917.
97. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from Post Wheeler, US Charge d'Affaires *ad interim* to Mr. Shidehara, August 7, 1917.
98. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from I. M. Tokugawa to Mr. Norman, August 9, 1917. The United States, having entered the war and having undertaken the so-called Hindu Conspiracy Trial, now asked for the deportation of Rash Behari Bose and Kesho Ram Sabarwal. (JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from Post Wheeler to Mr. Shidehara, September 1, 1917 and Note Verbale, September 1, 1917.) When Das arrived in San Francisco, the Consul General of Japan was particularly upset at the implication that Das had been sent to the states by the Japanese at the request of the American government. (JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from Consul General Uehara to Foreign Minister Motono, August 24, 1917.).
99. The text of the interview is found in JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, August 25, 1917.
100. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from H. Norman to Mr. Tokugawa, September 6, 1917. Private and Confidential.
101. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from I. M. Tokugawa to Mr. Norman, September 8, 1917. Private and Very Confidential
102. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Letter from H. Norman to Mr. Okabe, January 14, 1917. Private and Confidential.
103. *Ibid.*
104. *Ibid.*
105. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, undated MEMORANDUM. CONFIDENTIAL.
106. *Ibid.*
107. *Ibid.*
108. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Memorandum, February, 1919.
109. The case of Rash Behari Bose continued to rankle, especially since the British and the Japanese had both known his whereabouts for over a year.
110. JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, Report of Consul General, Calcutta to the Foreign Minister, September 2, 1919. Secret.
111. The refusal to permit Jain to land in Japan is detailed in JMFA 4. 3. 1. 17, June 17, 1919 and June 24, 1919. Secret.
112. *Ibid.*



## Discussion

*Mr. Gautam Chattopadhyaya* : I wish to add that one Japanese played a very significant and important role in the formation of the Indian revolutionary movement at the beginning of the twentieth century. In this connection I have to refer to the foundation of the *Anushilan Samity* in 1902. The first five office-bearers were : President—P. Mitra ; Vice-Presidents—Aurobinda Ghose and Chittaranjan Das ; Treasurer—Surendra Nath Tagore and Organiser-in-charge of physical activities—Jatindra Mohan Bandopadhyaya. Sister Nivedita, though not on the Executive, was considered one of the big six. This is confirmed both by British imperialist archives and by Bhupendra Nath Dutta in his famous book '*Bharater Dwitya Swadhinatar Sangram*' (the Second war of Indian Independence). Kakuzo Okakura, the great Japanese poet and philosopher, visited India in 1901 and was the guest of Surendra Nath Tagore, a nephew of Rabindra Nath Tagore, during his entire stay here. Sister Nivedita acted as the *via media* between Okakura and the earlier Indian revolutionaries. It is mentioned in Dutta's book in the reminiscences of Okakura written by Surendra Nath Tagore in *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* in 1938 and in police records in our State Archives that it was around Okakura that the first nucleus of the Indian revolutionary group grew up. Okakura's book '*Awakening of the East*' gave the revolutionaries great fillip. This is also confirmed by Rathindra Nath Tagore, Rabindra Nath's son, in his Bengali book '*Putri Smriti*' (Memories of my father). Now, the question is if our friends working on Japanese source material could give us the sources or enlighten us on the ways of getting at the Japanese side of such material. A great many letters were written by both Sister Nivedita and Surendra Nath Tagore to Kakuzo Okakura from Calcutta. We have the letters of Okakura, at least some of them, here. If we could trace the letters written to him by the earlier Indian revolutionaries, it would be a great help in revealing the nature of early period of Indo-Japanese relationship particularly relating to Japanese help for the Indian liberation movement.

Dr. Goodman has mentioned Kesoram Saberwal among the earlier Indian revolutionaries. Saberwal, in an interview given to Chinmohan Sehanavis in 1972, said that he met Netaji after his arrival in Japan, was arrested by the Japanese shortly thereafter and not released until the surrender of Japan. Saberwal added that he told Netaji that while he had complete faith in the revolutionary integrity of Netaji, he completely mistrusted the aims and objectives of the Japanese imperialists, who had no intention of helping the Indian liberation movement but just wanted to use Netaji for their own purposes. Saberwal stated that this report leaked out—not through Subhas Chandra Bose but through other means as a result of which he was detained and never again allowed to meet Netaji. If



any light could be thrown on this by the speaker, we shall be greatly benefitted.\*

*Dr. Goodman :* If you have contact with Mr. Saberwal, you can perhaps have access to whatever papers or documents he himself has. This is a facet of the Indian revolutionary movement in Japan which is very well-known. The problem was in part in the nature of the Indian National Congress chapter in Japan and the inter-personal rivalries among the leaders of the Japanese chapter. I have no way of knowing if the report that Mr. Saberwal gives is correct. But my presumption on the basis of what I know up to that point is that if things happened as he reported it, it would sound logical. Because, it would be a continuing outgrowth of the factional differences within the Indian National Congress, Japan Chapter. There was a split between Keso Ram Saberwal and Ananda Mohan Sahay. There were accusations as to who was supporting whom within the Indian leadership in India. In Japan this became an important question and it may well have been the source of Saberwal's reported remark to Netaji.

\* In a report to Netaji Research Bureau, Mr. Ananda Mohan Sahay says that he had known K. Saberwal in Japan since early twenties. Saberwal was a friend of Rash Behari Bose although he had nothing to do with him politically. He was suspected by the Japanese authorities of undesirable activities since long and was actually deported to Manchuria after the outbreak of Sino-Japanese War. Mr. Sahay adds : "I am certain he never met Netaji in Japan." He is very doubtful if Saberwal was in Japan at all when Netaji arrived. Mrs. Sahay, who was a resident of Japan throughout World War II, confirms Mr. Sahay's report. Ed.



# THE GREAT ESCAPE\*

SISIR K. BOSE

*Calcutta, India*

## I

In the Lahore Fort prison in November, 1944, a high British official of the Government of India, after accusing me of treasonable activities posed this question to me : "I suppose, your relations with your uncle before he left the country were rather close ?" I parried the question and its implication with the answer : "Well, in an Indian family relations between an uncle and a nephew are usually rather close." My interrogator growled.

The closeness developed in a rather unaccountable way in the context of Netaji's fateful decision to leave the country secretly in 1940. This particular uncle had always had a very special position among his rather large circle of nephews and nieces and particularly among my brothers and sisters. My parents, Sarat Chandra and Bivabati, by their general attitude towards Subhas Chandra in day to day life and the very special consideration they showed him in all situations, had fostered a definite bias in us in his favour. To this must be added his own personal charm and his ability to reduce himself to a play-mate of his young nephews and nieces and take part freely and cheerfully in all their youthful activities. I must however confess that despite parental encouragement and my uncle's personal attractiveness, an overwhelming sense of awe and my insurmountable diffidence prevented for a long time the development between us of what one might call common familiarity. Failing to achieve what others in the family or even outsiders could easily do, I persuaded myself to believe that it was not proper to seek a common and ordinary familiarity with an uncle who was so uncommon and extraordinary.

His interest in the next generation of the family was deep

\*Paper presented at Netaji Bhawan, Calcutta, on 25 January 1973.

Chairman : Dr. Alexander Werth



and abiding, regardless of their varied personalities and capabilities. He tried again and again to break my introversion but did not succeed except towards the end. He gave me the appellation of "the silent boy" who only spoke "in monosyllables" and who, even when provoked would only nod and smile. This state of affairs continued for long, although in my own way and even as a school boy, I followed his life and career closely and with fond admiration.

It was not before I was seventeen that I started taking an intelligent interest in political affairs and reading theoretical political literature. In my own mind, I even analysed and doubted the correctness of some of my uncle's political opinions and acts. In 1938, some time after his return from Haripura, he awakened my interest in international affairs by one simple assignment. He called me aside and asked me to listen regularly to Moscow radio broadcasts with particular attention to their reporting of Indian affairs and our national movement. I was to keep him informed of the trend of such broadcasts. I tried to do my best but the results were largely noncontributory.

The recollection that I have of my first contact with my uncle bears a strange parallel with the final encounter in 1940-41. That was way back in 1927. He had returned a sick man from his exile in Burma. Sitting at the foot-end of his bed—I was then a mere slip of a boy—I used to gaze at him and his eyes in wonder, as if an ascetic had come into our family. In 1940, once again sitting on his sick bed and looking into his eyes night after night, I felt as if a change had taken place. I saw revolution in flesh and blood.

## II

During Netaji's last term in jail from July to December 1940, I joined other members of the family on a number of occasions in formal interviews with him in the Presidency jail. I remember his making enquiries about the progress of my studies in the Medical College, not forgetting to remind me time and again that a half-engineer was better than a half-



doctor ! He would make similar enquiries about others also. We thoroughly enjoyed his gibes at the jail officials on the impending doom of the British Empire, which would result in an exchange of places between the jailors and the prisoners of the day. We felt highly interested in the Puja that Netaji organised inside the jail with the help of his fellow-prisoners in October. I joined the party that went to the jail gate to receive the image for immersion. My father used to be a regular visitor to his imprisoned brother. At this time I learnt from my mother that Netaji was pressing my father for arranging a meeting with Mian Akbar Shah, Forward Bloc leader of North West Frontier Province, during his holiday in North India during the Pujahs and asking Mian Sahib to proceed to Soviet Russia. I also learnt that Mian Akbar Shah had experience of such travels in the past.

Intense anxiety gripped the family for a week on account of the hungerstrike that he launched on the 29th November. Our anxiety deepened when we heard from my father, then Leader of the Opposition in the Bengal Legislature, that the Home Minister, Khwaja Nazimuddin, had told him of the very stiff attitude of the British masters in the matter. However, to our relief a message was flashed from the Elgin Road house in the afternoon of the 5th December that uncle had been released unconditionally and had arrived home in an ambulance car. Those of us who were at home rushed to see him. He lay in his room looking pale and tired. The moustache he had grown appeared to add to his sickly look. As I approached him, he took my hand in his and to my embarrassment held it firmly for rather an unusually long time. It was only later that I thought, or may be, just imagined, that the long and warm handshake was perhaps meant to be the beginning of my new relationship with him.

There were too many visitors during the next few days despite doctors' orders and I kept away. My mother who was visiting him daily told me that uncle had been making detailed enquiries about my daily routine in the Medical College. There was no direct hint in such enquiries that he wanted to see me.



## III

There were two Bose houses. The ancestral house was on Elgin Road where uncle was living at the time. The other, belonging to my father, was at 1 Woodburn Park, only three minutes' walk from the first, where I lived.

It was the week following his release. I was relaxing after lunch when Netaji's personal servant came to me at 1 Woodburn Park with a message that my uncle would like to see me on the same day. I went down to the Elgin Road house later in the afternoon. He was evidently expecting me. He arranged to have the room cleared as I went in. He was looking fresh although paler and thinner than his usual self. Only his bushy half-grown beard appeared odd. He was reclining against pillows on his wooden bed. He looked quite natural and I did not have any impression that he had anything very serious up his sleeves. In order to keep a distance—as was my wont—I tried to take my seat on the bed—which his late father used—next to his. He beckoned to me to come round and sit down on his bed to his right. I did so. This gesture of familiarity made me somewhat nervous.

He looked at me rather intensely for a few minutes—“Could you do a job for me?” (*Amar ekta kaj korte parbe?*)—that was how he opened the subject. As usual, I answered with a weak and ambiguous nod. “How well can you drive?” (*Tumi kemon gari chalate paro?*). I said: “I can do it tolerably well on the whole.” (*Ei ekrakam motamuti pari*). He went further and asked: “Have you ever done long distance driving?” (*Kokhono long distance gari chaliechho?*) I said no.

“Look here, you would have to reach me by car one night to quite a long distance, say Burdwan or some such place but nobody must know” (*Dakho, ekdin ratre tomake gari kore amake besh kichhu doore paunche dite hobe, keu kintu janbe na?*). I listened impassively. “Could you do it?” (*Parbe?*) I nodded again but the nod could mean a weak yes, or not quite sure. He evidently took it to be yes and went ahead. He said that the affair must be planned in a meticulous manner



and the plan must be "fool-proof". I must not of course breathe a word about it to *anybody*.

The only person in the Elgin Road house, he told me, who would know that he had left secretly for an unknown destination would be Ila, my cousin, who was a couple of years younger than me. He added that he had put her to test and he thought she could be relied upon.

When the first encounter was over, he asked me to go home and think over all the aspects of the plan and come again the next evening with clear-cut ideas. He repeated again and again that the plan must be "fool-proof" and that we must not take any chances.

I walked back to 1 Woodburn Park in a state of wonder and subdued excitement. What was all this about? My first guess was that he was perhaps planning a clandestine meeting with somebody or some people and that I was to help him get to the secret rendezvous.

#### IV

Brooding over the matter in bed till late that night, I realised that something most extraordinary and challenging was going to happen to my so far colourless life. I felt also that the sense of diffidence that always had bedevilled my relationship with my uncle had to be overcome.

At the second meeting, I felt no hesitation in responding to his invitation to take my seat on his bed. From then onwards, I used to sit on the bed to his left and discuss the plan with him hours on end. As things progressed and the plan matured in our minds, I began closing the main door of the room, which opened into the corridor, to discourage even casual visits by relations. The other door leading to his mother's room was in any event permanently closed.

When I went back to him the next evening, I had of course no clear-cut ideas in my head for the simple reason that the plan of escape he had given to me at the first meeting was quite nebulous. I gathered all my pluck to be able to face him. From now on I met him almost daily. The meetings had to



look natural. Often I had to hang around till outside visitors had left. If relations or servants were in the room, I just waited or fiddled with the radio or did something inconsequential. A nephew visiting a sick uncle should not normally arouse any suspicion. Even so, he thought of an excuse. If questions were asked, the alibi was to be that I was good at operating the radio and was helping him to listen to foreign broadcasts. In fact, he was following the course of the war very closely from day to day. He followed news broadcasts and commentaries from Berlin, Rome and London regularly and often from hour to hour. We all enjoyed his analysis of events. Every discomfiture of the British in war or diplomacy gave him real satisfaction.

As we proceeded with our talks, my self-confidence grew rapidly. I often felt amazed at my own newly acquired audacity in challenging some of his proposals. Eventually all my inhibitions in respect of my uncle disappeared.

## V

Soon after our secret confabulations started, he asked me a very difficult and delicate question very softly and gently. He asked me if I could do what he wanted me to without telling my parents (*Baba Ma ke na bole korte parbe ?*). I felt somewhat uncomfortable for a while and meekly answered : "Thick achhe !" ("All right !") The problem was fortunately not an immediate one. My father had already left for Kalimpong for a change for three weeks as he had not been keeping well at all for some time past. Mother was about to leave for my elder brother's place at Bararee with other children for the Christmas holidays.

In regard to my father, he said that never in his life had his 'Mejdada' stood in his way ; on the contrary, the elder brother had as a rule given him support and encouragement at all moments of decision. He would therefore be in a most difficult predicament if his Mejdada, on account of his present state of nervous and physical exhaustion, forbade him from taking the perilous step he was contemplating. On two or three occasions till my father's return in January, I remember his



sending letters to my father to the Sealdah station for being put directly in the mail train to the hills with the late fee paid. Evidently he was avoiding the usual route through the post office.

As we shall see later, by the time my parents returned to Calcutta, arrangements for the escape were in an advanced stage and I was already deeply involved. I did not have to tell my parents anything ; my uncle had done that himself. It did not appear at all that my parents were particularly concerned about their son's safety. They were certainly concerned about the risks of the undertaking as a whole because they were less optimistic about its success than my uncle.

It was only much later, after my arrest in 1942\*, that my father, then in detention in South India, became acutely aware of the danger facing me in prison. In a clandestine letter smuggled out of his detention camp in October which I read lying in my sick-bed as a prisoner patient in the Medical College Hospital, Calcutta, he gave me startling information. He had come to know that the British Government had by then fairly complete information about my role and that of Mian Akbar Shah in the escape. He therefore said in that letter that my illness (it was typhoid fever) was perhaps "a blessing in disguise" ; otherwise they might have shunted me off to the Red Fort or the Lahore Fort. Later still, in 1944-45, when he heard that I had been taken away to an unknown prison, he immediately guessed that I was in the Lahore Fort and made pathetic entries about my fate in his jail diary. As to my mother, she had taken me to have been dead in 1944-45 when I was kept incommunicado by the British Government.

## VI

It was not long before uncle gave me a fairly clear indication of the nature of the journey. He would be in disguise, he said and the date of his departure would depend upon a signal that he was expecting from the North West Frontier Province.

\* The writer was arrested in September 1942 for his involvement in the August Revolution.



The conclusion that he meant to flee the country was obvious.

The first step in the plan naturally consisted of a successful secret exit from his Elgin Road residence. It was obvious that on the success and secrecy of the exit would depend the success of the succeeding stages of the escape, it would reduce police surveillance of him into a mockery and put British intelligence into a hopelessly defensive position.

A number of possible ways of exit from the Elgin Road house were proposed and discussed threadbare till the final plan emerged.

The first one was that he would openly announce that he was retiring for convalescence to my father's garden house at Rishra on the Hooghly river about 16 miles from Calcutta on the Grand Trunk Road. And, I would drive him from there secretly one evening to Burdwan or Asansol. In any event, Rishra was considered a convenient halting place for a night if I was to reach him to Burdwan direct. To give credence to this possible plan, he asked me to drive down to the Rishra House late one evening without any notice to the caretaker and spend the night there. The caretaker was thus to be conditioned to my sudden arrival some other night.

The second plan that was discussed was a variant of the first. He was to shift after such an announcement to 1 Woodburn Park and occupy a room on the second floor opening on the terrace. The excuse would be that he needed plenty of fresh air and sunshine for his convalescence which he could not get in the Elgin Road house. The escape plan in that case could be drawn up under more favourable conditions and carried out without the necessity of deceiving so many members of the family including his old mother.

Both these plans were however discarded principally on the ground that the police would come to know that he was in a position to move out of the house and they would be unnecessarily and undesirably alerted. Ever since his release he was not stirring out of his room at all, thus giving the impression to all, particularly the police, that he was much too ill for any



major activity. That gave us the wonderful opportunity of catching the enemy unawares. The other consideration that weighed against a shift to Woodburn Park was that my father's establishment was run rather strictly and the constraints there were rather rigid. In contrast, things at the Elgin Road house were loose and lenient and one could get away with a lot of things with impunity.

The third possibility that was considered was to get my eldest brother Asoke Nath Bose who was working near Dhanbad, to take uncle along in his car during one of his return trips from Calcutta. This was not discussed in detail as we found out that there was no probability of my brother visiting us within the time schedule.

After the Rishra and Woodburn Park plans had been rejected, we had to fall back on a plausible plan of escape from the Elgin Road house itself. For a considerable time I could not just imagine that a drive-out in the normal fashion by the main gate was possible. So I racked my brains, and he let me do it. may be to sharpen my wits, to find out some means of his slipping out of the house and get into the car at some distance from the house. I thought of the possibility of his getting out of the house, in disguise of course, by the small side gate on the Western side of the house used usually by sweepers. I would be waiting near about the Elgin Road post office, pick him up and drive away. The backyard of the house had a full-fledged workshop with too many obstructions and there was no rear gate that he could use. We discussed such and similar other means of exit ad infinitum and finally got to the conclusion that the safest and the surest way for him was to board the car in the house itself. Further planning went on on this basis.

## VII

As we went on talking and planning night after night, he had to take care of many things to remove psychological and physical impediments to a successful escape. In his talks with relatives and friends as well as in his correspondence, he was



harping again and again and in a rather laboured fashion on his impending return to prison. And, he repeatedly told his relations, friends and comrades that as there was no possibility of his being set free before the end of the war, he must leave all his affairs, private and public, in proper order. For instance, I remember his talking about the fate of his Mahajati Sadan project in his absence. The Calcutta Corporation had leased out a piece of land for the project in his personal name. He was therefore worried that after his escape, the arm of the law would not spare this dream child of his. He toyed with the idea of getting his attorney to transfer the property to a board of trustees in good time. But he gave it up to avoid undue suspicions in friendly quarters.

Two cases were pending against him in the Alipore Court, one on account of a speech said to be seditious he had made earlier in the year and the other on account of an editorial in the 'Forward Bloc' of which he was the editor. He wanted by all means to avoid appearing in court and his ill health appeared to be the only proper excuse for non-appearance. For a while there was no difficulty. The first physician of the Calcutta Medical College who used to be consulted by his doctor brother Sunil readily and willingly gave necessary medical certificates for production in Court. But later on, when uncle was physically better, his doctor brother created difficulties. He thought that it was unbecoming of Subhas to try to delay going back to prison on uncertain medical grounds ! As the first physician might not sign certificates against the wishes of or without consulting the doctor brother, arrangements had to be made to get a renowned surgeon who was a personal friend of Netaji to see him without the knowledge of the doctor brother. The surgeon gave a certificate of a disabling surgical ailment.

The behaviour, nocturnal ones in particular, of relations, visitors, domestic servants, plainclothes police agents around the house and even the Alsatian dog of my doctor uncle had to be closely watched. Ila helped in watching the home front. I watched the miserable creatures commissioned to watch him



around the house, particularly on my way home at night. The plainclothes police agents had placed a wooden cot at the junction of Elgin Road and Woodburn Road. From the vantage point they could observe the two Bose houses. During the day and till late in the evening they used to walk up and down Elgin Road and Woodburn Road, see what was going on and return to their improvised resting place. As the night advanced they covered themselves up with blankets and slept on the cot hoping, I suppose, that all was well. An unemployed relative who was visiting daily and was by nature inquisitive became much too curious and started asking questions about my frequent night calls. Uncle gave him a letter of introduction to a high up in the Tata Organisation in Jamshedpur, gave him a lecture on the shame of a continued state of unemployment, provided him with the wherewithal for the trip and advised him not to budge from Jamshedpur until he was assured of a job there. The plan worked and the gentleman returned to Calcutta jobless after the escape.

While my parents were away and I was alone in the Woodburn Park house, a very good friend of the family with his wife arrived from Bombay as uncle's guests. I was asked to arrange for their stay and look after them at Woodburn Park. Their presence gave me a good excuse to continue my frequent visits to uncle at the Elgin Road house.

On the Christmas day of 1940, I was given an endurance test. He asked me to drive non-stop to Burdwan in the morning, lunch at the railway station, then return non-stop soon after to Calcutta and report to him on the degree of fatigue I felt. I reported back to him in due course in a reasonably good shape.

### VIII

While all this was going on, I received the first important assignment in connection with the Great Escape. As I called one evening as usual, I found a number of persons in his room and I chose to wait. But he called me in and introduced me to a handsome Pathan. Uncle's secretary was also in the room. Uncle told me that the Pathan who was Mian Akbar



Shah, was returning home the same evening. Uncle was sending his secretary direct and ahead of time to the Howrah Railway Station to arrange for Mian Sahib's railway ticket and reservation. He wanted me to take Mian Sahib in my car first to the market for some purchases, then to his hotel to pick up his luggage and finally to the Howrah Station. I was further told that as the secretary would be waiting at the front porch of the station, it would be all right for me to drop Mian Sahib there and return home.

The chauffeur of the car was at my service. During the drive I sat with Mian Sahib at the rear seat and talked with him in English. He told me that Netaji had informed him that I had been chosen to help him at this end like he was in charge of arrangements at the other and over the frontier. He wanted me to take him to the Mohammedan departmental store of Wachel Molla's on Dharamtala Street. He would buy a cap and a couple of pyjamas for Netaji necessary for his disguise. He would 'forget' the package in the car at the Howrah station and I would take charge of the things. I had noticed a tape measure lying about in uncle's room when we left.

We did according to instructions. Mian Akbar Shah and I entered Wachel Molla's shop together. But as he approached the appropriate counter for the purchases, I fell back and watched him impassively from a distance. He purchased a couple of loose and broad pyjamas and a black fez type of cap. The packet was thrown casually behind the rear seat of the car. We then proceeded to the hotel on Mirzapore Street where he was putting up. He picked up his baggage and we drove to the Howrah station. We found uncle's secretary waiting at the front porch of the station. He took charge of Mian Sahib and I asked the chauffeur to drive home. Before we had left the station precincts, however the chauffeur noticed the packet lying on the rear seat. He offered to rush with it to the platform. I pretended to be disgusted with all this bother and asked him to drive home and remarked that the things, whatever they were, could easily be sent to the visitor by post.



I had myself to do a round of purchases according to plan. First, I bought a medium-sized suitcase, an attache case and a bed-roll from a shop on Harrison Road. I got the initials of the intending traveller "M.Z." painted on the suitcase and the attache case. I purchased a pair of flannel shirts and toilet goods from the Central Municipal Market. According to his instructions, I disdainfully rejected all locally made stuff and picked up things of British make. Pillows and quilts I bought from Chandni Chowk on Dharamtala Street. I had however real difficulty in finding the rustic type of 'kabuli' sandals he wanted. Eventually I chose a pair from a Chinese shop in the Municipal Market.

He wanted to make a selection from his stock of warm clothing of European style. All such clothing had been in my mother's charge in the Woodburn Park house. Before my mother's departure from Calcutta, I had asked for the keys of the wardrobe from my mother on the pretext that uncle wanted to check up on what he had and what he should have with him for the long term in prison that awaited him. Bundles of clothing were taken to and fro by his personal servant. All that he chose for the journey were some warm under garments and a deep brown buttoned up coat which he wore when he left. I smuggled the bed-roll to the Elgin Road house a couple of days before the escape inside a bundle passing from one house to the other. He for some reason or other wanted the 'bed-roll' with him for necessary last minute packing on the day of the escape.

Apart from clothing and other personal effects, I received two editions of the Holy Quoran and some medicines, Ayurvedic tonics and nasal decongestants to be packed in the attache case.

I had to do the first regular stage-acting in connection with the printing of his visiting card. He of course gave me the text in block letters and in pencil with instructions to copy it and destroy the original. He wanted me to make sure that while ordering the card, it must appear that I was getting it for myself. So, one evening I dressed myself up in European style



and with a felt hat on my head came out of the house. Dodging a cousin with a lame excuse for such an unusual outfit on the way out, I went to a printing shop on Radhabazar Street. I talked in English with the man at the counter and placed the order. I had to repeat the performance on the day of delivery and passed on the cards to the owner which read as follows :

**Mohd. Ziauddin**  
 Travelling Inspector  
 The Empire of India Life Assurance Co. Ltd.  
 Permanent address :  
     Civil Lines  
     Jubbulpore

## IX

Carrying the goods to my room on the second floor of 1 Woodburn Park and storing them skilfully without rousing any suspicions was not a great problem as my parents and other members of the family were away. In order to avoid being noticed by servants I usually brought things home in the afternoon when they were usually resting and off guard. I rolled up the bedding and stored it inside my personal wardrobe. The suitcase was left under my bed together with a couple of others of the same kind. Clothing and personal effects were easy to conceal. I used to sleep alone in my room and there were hardly any visitors.

The choice of the car was also a matter we discussed at some length. My father had two cars at the time. One was a big *Studebaker* President and the other a comparatively rare German model *Wanderer* a product of the Auto Union. The *Studebaker* was registered in my mother's name and the *Wanderer* in mine. Father was aware of my weakness for automobiles since my childhood and registering one of the cars in my name was probably a concession to my fancy for cars. And, although the smaller *Wanderer* was more accessible to us, my



father allowed me a lot of liberties in regard to either of the car. I could drive around a lot subject of course to his requirements and convenience. So far as driving was concerned, I felt at home in either. In the beginning we were inclined to favour the Studebaker because we thought it was more reliable and also because of its speed. But a number of other considerations led to our choosing the Wanderer for the drive. First, my disappearing with the Studebaker for two or three days while father was in town would appear odd to many. Secondly, this car had a distinguished look and widely known and recognised easily as my father's car. As to Wanderer, I was after all the registered owner and my driving around in it would not cause any flutter. Once it was settled that we would be doing it in the Wanderer car, I systematically got its parts checked up by our regular garage people. I arranged for a spare tyre and a new battery. In order to give myself more confidence, I drove it down one afternoon to a lonely spot in the east of the city and practised changing tyres for any possible contingency. Meanwhile, the Studebaker left for my brother's place near Dhanbad with a party of relatives on holiday.

A preparatory visit to my brother's place near Dhanbad would be a most desirable thing for me for a number of reasons. I therefore arranged to be called there to fetch my mother back to Calcutta. Our guests from Bombay were due to return early in January. I accompanied them in the train upto Dhanbad. A couple of days in Bararee where my brother worked gave me a wonderful opportunity to reconnoiter the area and establish landmarks in my mind for the coming trip. Although the details of the plan were yet to be settled, it was certain that, in any event, I would use my brother's house as a resting place for one night during the journey with uncle. Moreover, a visit to my brother on some pretext would provide a good alibi for my absence from home. In accordance with uncle's instructions, I told my brother at Bararee that I would soon be visiting those parts on some assignment from uncle and that I would then be spending a day or two with them (*"Ranga kakababur kaje amake shigri edike aste hobe, sey*



*samae ami abar asbo*”). I arranged to be in the car (father’s Studebaker) that was to bring a part of the family including my maternal aunt to Calcutta. I carefully noted the route from Bararee to Dhanbad and then on to the Grand Trunk Road on the way to Calcutta. I would have to traverse the same route in reverse with Netaji in a few days.

Between Asansol and Burdwan a major mechanical breakdown occurred and there was no way of repairing the car without a vital part being brought from Calcutta. So, we left the car in a local garage and travelled to Calcutta in a rams-hackle taxi. The incident sent a shiver through my spine. I prayed that Wanderer might behave better when the time came to show its mettle !

## X

With my return from the reconnaissance sortie to Bararee began the final preparatory phase of the great event. Netaji was getting rather impatient on account of the delay in the arrival of the signal from the North West Frontier. When he first broached the subject to me, he had indicated that he might leave by the end of December. In that event he would have left without meeting my father who returned from Kalimpong only in January.

Details of the plan of getting out of the Elgin Road house were now being worked out. His own disguise was to be that of an up-country Muslim gentleman. He tried out the outfit one night and assessed its effectiveness in the life-size mirror in his room. When I saw him the next day he was most enthusiastic about the disguise and thought he would pass unrecognised in it even in a crowd. I laughed and felt bold enough to suggest that no amount of disguise could conceal the personality and features of Subhas Chandra Bose. He was disappointed. He then disclosed to me the plan for deception that he had for covering his escape. He would declare that he was going into seclusion for a few days, would not see or talk to anyone during the self-imposed retirement. His mother’s cook would be in charge of passing his food, which would consist strictly of vege-



tarian dishes, milk, sweets and fruits, across a screen to be put up in his room separating his part of the room from the rest. Ila would be in charge of carrying out the bluff after his escape, eat the food and do all else that was necessary. Fortunately, most of the rather large Bose family, except his mother and Ila, slept on the second floor while Netaji's room was on the first. Fortunately also, his mother was leading a rather retired life and would not be provoked into taking a difficult stance. The servants of the house were generally out of the way after dinner-time. Only Netaji's personal servant had to be tackled properly. He was in charge of closing the gate and bolting the main front door on the ground floor. He was to be allowed to do so and then asked to retire. Luckily he was a deep sleeper. We decided that for the *exit*, we would use not the main front door but the stair-case of the out house at the rear of the building. The Alsatian dog belonging to his doctor brother and left free in the night could be a real problem. In fact, the dog had once attacked a very important visitor leaving late at night. The incident was sufficient excuse for Ila to approach our doctor uncle to keep his dog on leash at night for the safety of Netaji's visitors who might be leaving late. Fortunately, the house had no outside lights burning late in the night. As Netaji would have to go across a long corridor in any case, peeping from the neighbouring houses could be a problem. As to plains clothes secret police agents outside the house, I reported to uncle that they were getting used to taking it easy after nightfall. All that we had to do was to see that none of them was too close to the gate when we drove out.

It was still ten to twelve days to go before the escape when my father returned to Calcutta. Uncle asked me to tell father that he would like to see him as early as possible. I quietly mentioned this to my mother on the day of father's arrival. Father met uncle the following evening. A couple of days later my mother told me that my father had jocularly asked her to find out if their son (meaning myself) meant to plunge into the adventure with his uncle without telling his parents. I had nothing much to say. But the fact that my parents now knew



about it and that they had taken it so well brought me a sense of confidence and self-assurance. I could now see that uncle was cutting his evening sessions with me in anticipation of father's arrival. At this time, uncle went on repeating the question whether all was set and if I was prepared (*"prastut"*) for the combat. Father did not discuss the matter with me at all till the day of the escape. It was clear from the hints that mother dropped rather casually that the brothers were going over the entire plan all over again between themselves.

The fateful day was drawing near. Uncle informed me that father had made certain changes in the plan. One of them was that one of the boys of the family residing in the Elgin Road house should be asked to help in carrying on the bluff of his being in seclusion after his escape. Father did not like the idea of Ila, a young girl, facing the inevitable police zoolum later. Uncle had evidently accepted father's suggestion. After some deliberation it was decided to entrust this job to Dwijendra Nath, a son of our eldest uncle, with Ila on the side lines.

## XI

During the planning of the details of the journey, I had understood that I would drop uncle near a Dak Bungalow near about Dhanbad on my way to my brother's place, spend the day there, pick him up from the Dak Bungalow in the evening and drive him to the railway station of his choice. Towards the end, he told me that he had decided to go to my brother's place and spend the day there in disguise rather than go elsewhere. He explained that it was much safer in a necessity to take one's own people into confidence rather than take a risk with strangers. There was a possibility that some members of my mother's family might be there at Bararee with my brother at the time. Even so, he told me, he would take the risk of taking them into confidence rather than stay in a Dak Bungalow.

We were deliberating for some time fruitlessly on the means of getting the chauffeur of the Wanderer car out of the way



for two or three days. Just a few days before the journey, something providential happened. A telegram arrived from the chauffeur's home that his mother was very ill and his presence there was urgent and essential. I felt immensely relieved and gladly gave the welcome news to uncle.

The story about my sudden visit to my brother's place in the coal fields was supposed to be that my sister-in-law was ill and that father wanted me to find out personally what was wrong. It was arranged that on our arrival there I would send a telegram to father saying that sister-in-law was better and that there was no cause for anxiety.

In the event of our being challenged on the road it was settled that I would pose as the owner driver and Subhas Chandra Bose as my chauffeur and attendant. I was to remain in my seat in the case of any such encounter and uncle would come out of the car and do all the necessary acting. If asked about my destination, I was to mention the next station ahead. The answer to any question as to the cause of driving late in the night was to be that we had been delayed by a breakdown on the way.

Uncle gave me only a little over two days' notice of the date of escape. It was to be the evening of Thursday the 16th January 1941. I immediately got busy about the car. I wanted the car to be freshly serviced but the earliest booking I could get was on the day of the escape. Nevertheless, I agreed.

There was no question of asking for leave of absence from my college. I attended to my work on the day but managed to get away early on some pretext. Explanations were reserved till after the mission was over and I was safely back home. I was not to be in disguise. I was to be in my then usual dress viz., dhoti, shirt, a warm jacket and chappals. Just before the event, uncle gave me one of his caps—a Kashmiri woollen one (which he had worn in Europe in the thirties). I was to wear it in case we were challenged or when we were driving in daylight to give a somewhat different slant to my appearance. I have treasured the cap fondly. I was to carry only a small suitcase for my personal effects.



Only on the night before the escape, it suddenly occurred to me that the suitcase that I had bought and packed up for uncle might not, because of its size, be put into the luggage space behind the rear seat of the car. I measured the height of the suitcase and that of the inlet of the space and found that my apprehension was unfortunately true. I decided to exchange the suitcase with one of my father's of the proper size. I had to scrape off M. Z. from the one and S. C. B. from the other, get some Chinese ink in a rush and interchange the initials on the suitcases. The work was clumsy but there was no other way.

## XII

The fateful day eventually arrived. I behaved like somebody possessed though without showing any outward sign of excitement. Uncle told me towards the end that he was taking a plunge into an uncertain future and as many as twenty years might pass before he could return home. As to the escape and my part in it, his prognostication changed as the day drew near. He was quite sanguine at first but doubts seemed to have entered his mind now. He made two significant remarks. One was that if the secret could be kept somehow for four or five days at most, 'I'd jumped the ditch' (*Ami pagar par hoye jabo*), he said. And the other was that he was not very sure that my part in the job would remain a secret for long in view of so many possible sources of leak. He asked me to be prepared for harsh treatment from the police and perhaps a long term in jail—nothing more serious.

The Wanderer car was under servicing on that day. And it was taking an agonizingly long time. The car however arrived when the evening was well advanced. I got the luggage ready.

Father walked up to the second floor and called me out to the spacious terrace. Anxiety was writ large on his face. I had never had a more solemn meeting with my father in my life. He put me a number of pointed questions regarding the whole plan. It was clear that he had all the details in his mind. The



terrace was lit up. He taught me a very important lesson when he said in the beginning that he wanted to speak to me in the open because he believed that 'a conspiracy under the lamp-post' had the best chance of success. I could see that he had grave apprehension regarding our safety. He asked me if I was absolutely sure of my physical endurance to carry out job in hand. I told him that driving a car was something I enjoyed and I was confident of myself and also of my car. Father was almost certain that we would be challenged at Chandernagore and our car searched by the French police for contraband goods. And if we were challenged, he was very doubtful if uncle's disguise could stand the test. It was decided that I would send father a telegram from Bararee mentioning my sister-in-law's health and we took leave of each other.

I heard from mother later on that father kept awake till 2 o'clock in the morning waiting to hear the familiar hum of the Wanderer car passing in front of our house towards the north. But he did not hear the sound of the passing car and went to bed wondering what might have happened.

I came down and asked the cook for early dinner telling him that I was tired and wanted to go to bed early. My mother sat quietly by me as I ate. I then followed her into her room and asked for some money for contingencies on the way. 'God only knows what you people are up to !', that was all she said to me and smiled faintly. I had to get the other chauffeur of the house out of the way. He lived on the premises but used to eat out. Mother arranged to send him away for his meals.

I took the Wanderer car out of the garage and parked it close to the pantry door. There used to be a porter at the front door under the porch and he had to be bypassed when I brought the luggage down. I did that in stages—first from the second to the first floor and then from the first to the ground floor, hiding them in dark corners on the way out. I was able load them into the car unnoticed by other children of the house or the servants.

It was around 8.30 in the evening when I was ready to go. I came out into the front porch in the most casual manner and



met the porter. I told him that I was going out to our garden house at Rishra and If I was delayed there for any reason, I would spend the night there. They were not to wait for me beyond 11 p.m. but were to close the gate.

I drove out and turned northward, opposite to the direction to the Elgin Road house. I filled the tank from a petrol pump on Lower Circular Road, obtained an additional can of petrol and got the tyre pressure and the battery checked. I moved on to Chowringhee and entered Elgin Road from that direction. I drove into the Elgin Road house in the most natural manner and parked the car near the rear stair-case.

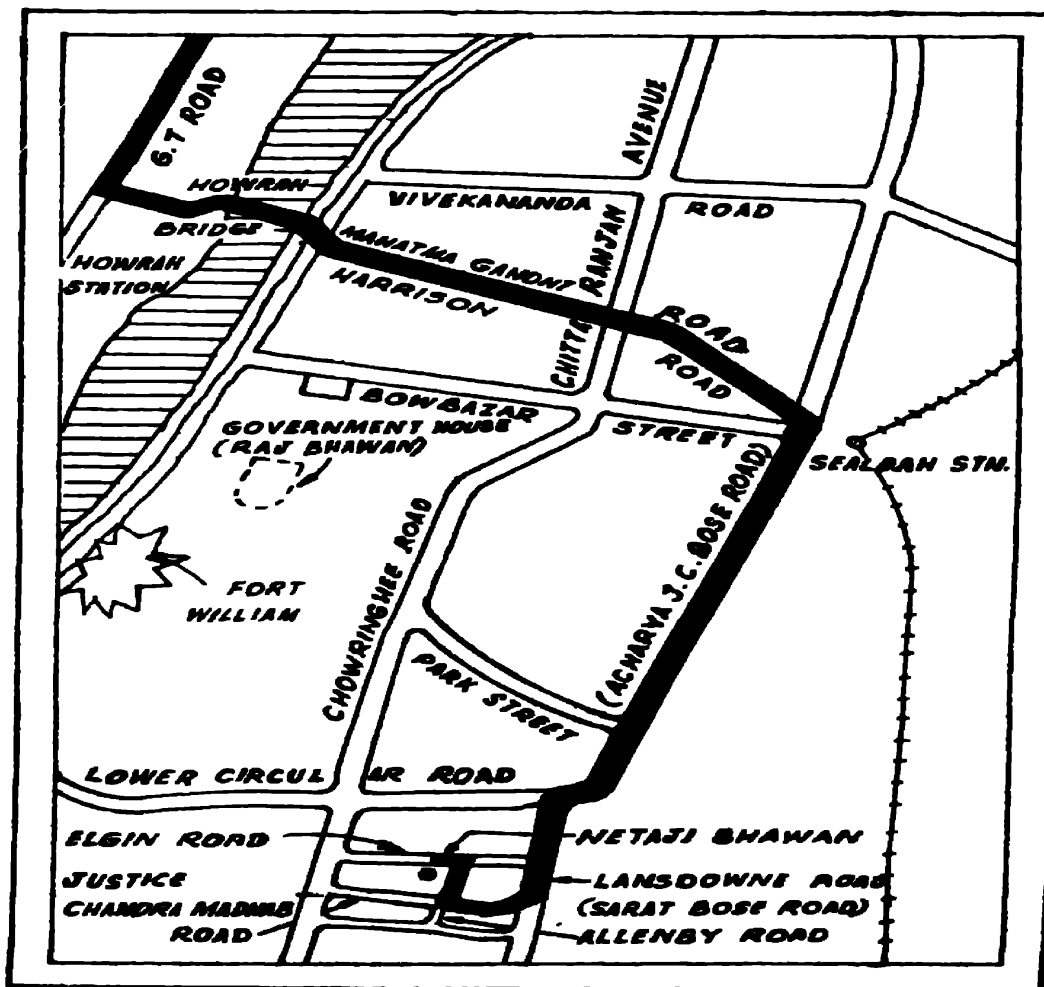
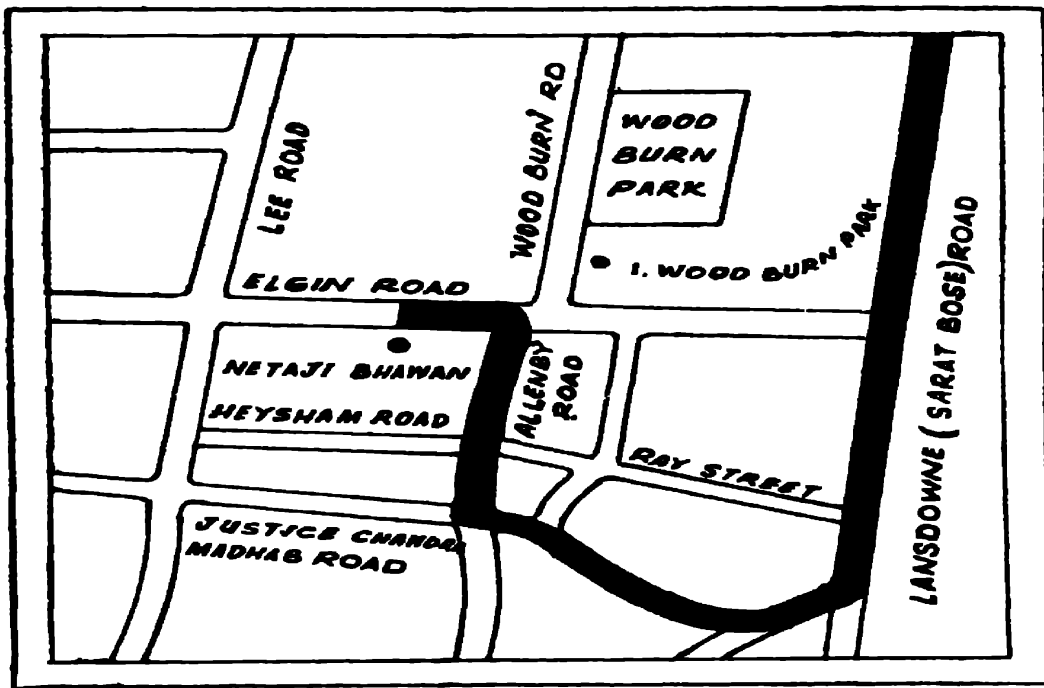
I left my jacket in the car and went upstairs in the most casual and care-free manner.

### XIII

Uncle was then changing into silk dhoti and chaddar and preparing for a ritualistic dinner that he wanted to take in the presence of his mother and others of the family on the eve of going into 'seclusion'. Ila, Dwijen and Aurobinda (who I found had by then been taken into confidence and asked to help in carrying on the bluff) were improvising a partition of the room with screens. Uncle ate his special dinner sitting on the floor at the far end of the room surrounded and watched by his mother, sisters-in-law, nieces and nephews, of whom I was one. After he had finished, grandmother and others took leave of him without realising that it was going to be a long separation. Uncle looked serious but kept his emotions under control.

Uncle had evidently been able by then to have convinced the members of the family of his "pious resolution" and explained to them how things had to be managed during his self-imposed retirement. The manner of serving food from outside the screen was explained to the cook ; a number of small chits of paper with various ready-made instructions scribbled on them in uncle's own hand were left behind for being shown to visitors according to the nature of their business ; he also left a number of letters addressed particularly to comrades in





PLAN SHOWING THE ROADS FOLLOWED BY THE  
CAR AFTER EXIT FROM THE RESIDENCE ON  
ELGIN ROAD







prison which were to be post-dated and mailed one after another after he had left.

As the night advanced, the members of the family retired to their rooms on the top floor one by one. His mother retired to her room next to uncle's. I have no knowledge how long she was awake or whether she was awake when we left a little after 1.30 at night. Other elders were no problem. Only two older cousins chose to hang around. I sat with one of them in the next room (Ila's bedroom) listening to the radio and trying to tire him out with all sorts of diversionary conversation. Around eleven o'clock he yielded and declared his intention to go to bed and I rose with him pretending to be preparing to go home. The other elder cousin was more stubborn and was clearly suspicious. He was coming back from time to time from his room upstairs to see what was going on. He even asked why I was staying back so late and why I had my car with me that particular evening. I gave him some explanation which seemed not to give him full satisfaction. Eventually, as time wore on, uncle asked Dwijen to go upstairs and keep the suspicious person company and hold him in bed somehow till we had left.

The route of exit—along the long corridor to the rear of the building and the rear stair-case—was checked and was found clear.

The screens were in position and uncle was dressing up as Mohd. Ziauddin in his part of the room. His bedding was rolled up together with some undergarments and extra sheets.

Netaji wore his own closed-collar brown long coat, broad pyjamas and the black fez-type cap. He made an important change in the original plan of disguise. He said that he had tried the kabuli chappals that I had bought for him. But he felt that he would not be able to walk in them well. He therefore chose to wear his own old pair of laced shoes which he had used in Europe and in which he felt safe and comfortable. He discarded his usual pair of spectacles in which he was usually seen and took with him a pair he had given up more than a decade ago, oval glasses with a frame of thin rolled gold.



He would wear glasses only when he would walk alone and in the dark. Otherwise he would appear without them.

Dwijen's instructions were that he was firstly to hold his suspicious cousin down and secondly, watch the road and give us the GO signal by clearing his throat loudly when the front of the house was clear of the CID men and other passers-by.

We hardly imagined that full three hours had passed while we waited for the coast to be clear. Eventually the signal was heard from above and we got ready to move. Netaji came out into the sort of vestibule that had been carved out near the exit door of the room. He affectionately bade good-bye to Ila, with the parting words, 'God bless you!' She had already been told that lights in his room should be kept burning till at least an hour after we had left.

Aurobinda carried the hold-all and was asked to lead the way. Uncle came next and I formed the rear. The three of us, on tip-toe and grazing along the inner wall of the long corridor, moved out. The moon was shining bright and uncle had warned that there must not be any shadows on the wall. It was a perfectly silent march and we reached the bottom of the rear stair-case by the side of which I had parked the car. Aurobinda put the hold-all by the driver's scat, opened the left rear door for Netaji and then made a quick march to open the front gate. Netaji took his seat without the slightest noise and held the door without closing it so that anybody awake might not hear two doors closing instead of one and might not suspect that two men were leaving instead of one. After uncle was comfortably seated, I stepped out rather noisily stamping the ground with my chappals, took my seat and banged the door with force. Only a pack of crows made some noise in response to my demonstration.

As I saw the front-gate opening up in front of me, I started the car and making a hell of a noise, drove out without losing much time.

#### XIV

According to his instructions, I took at first a southerly



direction although our destination was to the North. We did not find anything within any dangerously short distance from us. The CID people were comfortably settled under blankets on a makeshift wooden bed at the junction of Elgin Road and Woodburn Road. They had chosen this strategic site in order to be able to keep watch on the two Bose houses simultaneously and get in case of necessity to the front of either house without losing time. While we drove out, they were clearly not awake. We went down Elgin Road only for a short distance and then turned southward into Allenby Road. We took the first road to the left towards Lansdowne Road and then turned northward to get on to Lower Circular Road. After we had entered Allenby Road, Netaji closed the door he was holding on to. For quite some time both of us kept on looking back frequently in order to see if any car was following us. Nobody evidently was but any moving light behind us made us suspicious. I felt quite concerned about the delay in our start because we had planned to be in Dhanbad before it was light and I did not want to take any risk by driving too fast. Out of anxiety I was unnecessarily flashing my torchlight again and again on the dashboard clock to check on the time. We drove down Lower Circular Road as far as Sealdah. Near Sealdah we had to slow down as we came upon a collection of hackney carriages shunting about on the main road. As I flashed my torch on the clock—complaining that these people were delaying us further—Netaji warned me saying that the light reflected from the dashboard was lighting up his face and I must not play with the torch in that fashion.

As we drove up the whole length of Harrison Road, we realised that Calcutta was asleep and we felt reassured. Only near the Howrah bridge did we see a couple of taxis and a few resting hackney carriages. There were two ways of crossing the river to get to the Grand Trunk Road, one across the Howrah bridge and the other across the Willingdon bridge by Dakshineswar. The latter was a better route in that the roads were better. But there was a toll system on the Willingdon bridge and the toll collectors used to come



close to the passing cars and, who knows, might recognise somebody !

The noise that the wheels made against the surface of the Howrah bridge and the cobbled roads of Howrah disturbed me. As if people were listening ! As we got to the Grand Trunk Road and passed through the industrial areas, we passed armed police sentries here and there who looked at us but did not bother. Between ourselves we went on identifying the landmarks and the towns, Lilooah, Uttarpura, Bally, Bhadreswar, Kotrung, Konnagar, Rishra, Serampore and so on. He evidently knew all about the places but he allowed me to lecture to him.

After we had driven for an hour, I suggested that uncle might try to sleep so as not to get too tired at the end of it. I had all along felt really concerned whether he was well enough physically for strains and risks of the journey. He would not sleep because, as he said, it was bad for the driver if the only other occupant of the car slept. He must keep me company and so he did. He offered me hot coffee from time to time, poured it out of the thermos flask that Ila had given us, and even offered to hold my cup as I sipped coffee at a barred level-crossing. He wanted me to relax.

He opened serious conversation by referring to De Valera's escape and asked me if I knew about it. Fortunately I had looked up some of the famous escapes of history during the past month.

He startled me by saying that he had seriously thought of giving up his plan for the night in the face of the suspicions he had raised in the minds of some members of the family, outside the conspiracy. He said that in matters such as this there was a limit upto which one could go in the matter of taking people into confidence. He wanted me particularly to talk on my return to those who knew about his secret departure and ask them to strictly adhere to his instructions to keep their 'mouth shut'. He told me further to continue to visit the Elgin Road house daily as before and spend some time there every evening. Father also later on asked me to do the same.



About midway between Calcutta and Burdwan, I had to brake up the car rather abruptly when I suddenly came upon a closed railway crossing. The engine stopped and would not restart for a while because of an overflow of petrol. Uncle was really concerned. I assured him that things would be all right in a few minutes. Meanwhile he served me coffee.

Some final decisions were taken regarding our plans for the next twentyfour hours. He gave me details of how he would approach and enter my brother's house at Bararee. Another decision that he made during the drive was that the idea of my sending a telegram to father in Calcutta from Bararee should be dropped. There was no necessity of providing unnecessarily a record of my absence from Calcutta either to the Government department or to other members of the family who did not know of my journey and who might by chance see the telegram.

As we passed Chinsurah and approached Chandernagore, we prepared ourselves for any possible encounter with the French police, with what I thought to be an absurd master-chauffeur drama. Father's grim forebodings had made us particularly alert about the French city. The road through it however was completely empty. Only a couple of traffic police constables in their rather different sort of uniform were sighted in the bylanes. We heaved a sigh of relief when we got through unscathed.

I maintained moderate speed and did not try to make it too fast. The Howrah-Burdwan stretch of the Grand Trunk Road had many curves and bends. Proper wheel control was therefore desirable. Netaji recalled the many other night drives he had undertaken in the course of his tours round the country. He was used to faster driving but left the matter entirely to me. Both of us were particularly concerned about the rate of our progress. As the milometer of the car was not working well, I frequently steadied the steering wheel with one hand and flashed the torchlight on the passing milestones.

When we passed Burdwan it was already past four o'clock. I pointed the railway station to him and sped through the town where everybody and everything was asleep.



Beyond Burdwan, the road straightens out a lot and I could safely accelerate the pace. The car appeared to be performing better and better as it warmed up! As we passed through Durgapur forest, the well-known hide-out of dacoits of olden days, the night landscape seemed to change—the red soil, the tall trees and the bright moonlight together created a romantic set-up too absorbing for one like me tasting adventure for the first time in his life. I was dashing along at high speed when I suddenly discovered that a large pack of buffaloes was crossing the road just in front of me. Fortunately the brakes did not fail and the car screeched to a halt just short of a direct collision with the animals. They jostled around the car for a little while and then moved away. My heart beat heavily and I looked askance at uncle. I found him so unexpectedly unperturbed that I forgot about the episode and sped along.

When we reached the outskirts of Asansol, the dawn was just breaking. I noticed a petrol pump just outside the town and wanted to re-fill my tank. Netaji did not quite like this. (*“Na nile hoy na ?”*) Can't you do without it? He said pointing to the can of petrol I had with me. I said that that should be always be on reserve and that I did not want to take any chances. He clearly did not want strangers to come too near him. I parked the car a little ahead of the pump so that the vendor operated from well behind the car and as he did so I kept him engaged in conversation. I drove through Asansol town as fast as I could.

Between Asansol and Dhanbad we drove in good morning light. For once I felt that his disguise was good. The changing gradient of this stretch of Grand Trunk Road appeared to be helping us in hiding at the bottom of the slopes and rising from time to time only to go down again. A number of cars passed us from the opposite direction. I had been wearing my cap since daylight broke and I thought it gave me a sense of safety.

There was a check-post for passing vehicles at a village called Gobindapur a small distance from where the road to Dhanbad branched off from the G. T. Road. As I approached it, I could see the barrier coming down slowly. I slowed down



and I found a man coming forward with a pencil and a book in hand. When I had come sufficiently near the man moved backwards and the barrier was also lifted simultaneously. Soon after I left the Grand Trunk Road in the direction of Dhanbad.

I remarked that the man had noted the registration number of our car, adding that it was a routine matter, which I had noticed while passing this way only a couple of weeks ago. Uncle asked me at least thrice if I was sure that the man had written down the number of the car.

We passed through one part of Dhanbad town and I felt extremely uncomfortable in broad daylight because of our association with the place and the risk of being recognised. I started counting turns and identifying culverts, chimneys and tenements for the right way to Bararee where my brother lived. I was delighted when I recognised my brother's house and also the Coke Oven Plant behind it where he worked. It was around 8.30 a.m. I was to drop uncle at a safe and reasonable distance from the house, give him the direction to it and drive into the house alone. Uncle wanted me to be absolutely sure that I was showing him the right house. He chose a spot about 400 yards from the house where he got down from the car.

## XV

I drove into my brother's house with confidence and quite naturally. I found two men, one of them was my brother's driver—in front of the house when I got down and I was glad that I was seen coming in alone. I left my small baggage and uncle's bedroll behind and rushed into the house. I had only ten to fifteen minutes time to prepare my brother for what was coming.

My brother was in his bedroom. I knocked at the door and knocked hard. I was impatient and felt that we were losing precious time. My brother was somewhat surprised to see me although he had some warning of a visit. I conveyed to him as clearly and as quickly as possible uncle's instructions, what we had to do. I told him that I had brought uncle as narrow in disguise and had set out on a top secret mission. The G.



him on the way so as to give everybody the impression that his coming had nothing to do with mine. He would arrive in a few minutes and want to see my brother on the plea of insurance business. My brother was to tell him that as it was already time for him to go to work he had no time to spare then. Then uncle would say that as he had come a long way, he would not mind waiting for an opportunity to talk to my brother later on. Uncle would also ask for my brother's hospitality for the day. All the talk would be in English and as far as possible, within the hearing of the servants. Plans for the evening and the departure would be made later.

I had hardly finished talking to my brother when a servant announced that a stranger had come and wanted to see my brother. I pretended to be completely disinterested and sought out my sister-in-law inside the house. The stage-acting that we carried on that day, the 17th January, 1941, until we came home in the early hours of the next morning after seeing uncle off, would be a story by itself.

My brother went out to the verandah and had a talk with the stranger in the pre-arranged pattern. He brought the visitor into the sitting room, called his bearer and instructed him to make arrangements for the visitor's stay for the day in the spare bedroom. His meal was to be served separately in his room. As my brother was giving instructions to his servant, I casually strolled into the room and my brother introduced me to uncle in English. Breakfast was served to uncle in the sitting room. I had mine with my brother and sister-in-law in the dining room inside.

My brother soon left for his place of work. I spent some time chatting with my sister-in-law and then had a good wash and rest. Uncle had the same in his room.

My brother came home for lunch. I had a hearty meal with my brother and sister-in-law while uncle ate his in his room as an unknown visitor would. My brother went back to ~~came~~ ~~and~~ ~~without~~ seeing uncle. I drove down to the town to fill my Dhanbad nk.

it, I could ~~se~~ slept soundly and comfortably in the afternoon as I



could make out from the heavy breathing I heard from the other side of the house. He did not stir out of the room till late in the afternoon.

When my brother came home from work uncle sent word by a bearer that he would like to have a word with my brother. Uncle and brother had a conference in the outside verandah as I sat unconcerned glancing over periodicals inside. After a discussion with my brother, uncle finally decided upon Gomoh and not Asansol where he would take the train. When I was told of it, I frankly confessed that I was not sure of the particular route to Gomoh and said that things would be all the more difficult for me at night and that I would like my brother to be my guide for the drive. Uncle agreed. But my brother said that he would not like to leave my sister-in-law alone in the house in that lonely locality at night. Uncle thereupon decided that my-sister-in-law should also be in the party.

Instructions were given to the servants to serve dinner to the guest early as he had a train to catch. We had also an early dinner on the pretext that my brother and sister-in-law were taking me out to visit friends. When all of us were more or less ready and the evening was well advanced, uncle made a demonstration of bidding good-bye to me and my brother in English in the presence of the servants in the verandah and walked out of the house. He was to go along the road by which we had come in and wait for us at a distance. The three of us went out after a while in my car. We found uncle on the roadside and picked him up.

## XVI

With my brother acting as the guide, we drove in the direction of Gomoh. Uncle, my brother and sister-in-law all sat in the rear while I had uncle's bedroll by my side to keep company. We had more than enough time on our hands. The Delhi-Kalka Mail, the train uncle would board was due at Gomoh well after midnight. And the distance we had to cover was only about thirty miles. So we took it easy. The road was narrow and the surface was not as good at all places as on the G. T.



Road. We made two long stops on the way. At one of the stops we sat and watched from under the cover of a tree a long procession of bullock-carts pass by. The music created by the jingling bells on the necks of the animals provided a strange background to what was perhaps the greatest adventure in our contemporary national history. We had our second stop nearer our destination among flowing rice fields, bathed in bright moonlight with the silhouette of the hill of Pareshnath in the distance. As we moved closer to the Gomoh railway station the road became rather difficult and when we entered the station yard it was about time for the train to arrive. My brother and I got the three pieces of luggage out and shouted for a porter. One sleepy fellow eventually came out of the porters' shed and picked up the things.

"I am off ; you go back." was all that he said at the end. I stood motionless and speechless and forgot even to do my pronam (touching the feet in salutation). So also was my brother. We watched him mount the overbridge slowly after the porter and walk across it with his usual swaying majestic gait till he disappeared into the darkness towards the platform on the opposite side. By that time the rumbling of the approaching mail train was audible. We waited and hoped that everything would go well. Eventually we heard the train steam off and then saw a garland of lights moving away and away to the tune of rhythmic clatter of moving wheels.

## XVII

We drove back to Bararee and it was already 3 a.m. when we went to bed.

My brother had remarked that uncle appeared to be blazing the path of India's old-time revolutionaries and was perhaps going to Russia. I agreed with him generally but added that I had no doubt in my mind that his ultimate destination for the present was Germany.

The next morning, Saturday, the 18th January, at about 9 a.m. in the morning I set out on my way back to Calcutta. It was entirely a different sort of drive. As if I had never felt



so care-free in my life, I sang to myself almost all the way. Only once near about Chinsurah where I found a posse of uniformed policemen, did I suddenly feel insecure and even imagined that they might as well have just been waiting for me.

I drove into 1 Woodburn Park about 4 in the afternoon. I left the car in the porch and quickly went upstairs and found mother in the hall. She told me that father was getting ready to go downstairs. I waited for him in the drawing room which was just by the main stair-case. He joined me there soon after and I gave him a short account of the journey. I was rather surprised when my father told me, that he did not expect any telegram from me. Because, he thought, uncle would also realise, as father did after we left, that it would be unwise to send a telegram.

Our whole family had been invited to the wedding of one of Deshbandhu C. R. Das's granddaughters which was taking place on that day in the evening. I felt quite tired out after driving nearly five hundred miles in less than fortyeight hours. But father insisted that I should attend the wedding, even if I might be somewhat late. He took me with him when he went after finishing his day's work. Curiously, people there made enquiries of me about uncle and his health.

I felt reassured to hear from my mother that my absence from home had not been noticed very much. My second sister who asked questions had been given some explanation. Two cousins who used to be regular visitors in the evenings had failed to show up for the past two days.

For a full week the bluff of uncle being in seclusion in his room went on and not many eyebrows were raised in disbelief or doubt.

The next date of hearing of court proceedings against Netaji was fixed for Monday the 27th January. Father was of the opinion that the "discovery" of uncle's disappearance should not be left to the police after his failure to appear in court. A conference was held in father's bedroom in 1 Woodburn Park on Saturday the 25th January attended by Dwijen, Aurobinda and myself and the details of the plan of disclosure worked out.



Father would leave as usual the same evening to spend the Sunday at his garden house at Rishra. The arrangement was that meals to be served to uncle on Saturday evening would be left untouched. The cook would naturally raise a row over it the next morning and then the matter would be taken up by my cousins. After the "discovery" of his not being in the room a frantic search would be launched. Parties would be sent out in different directions. One such party would rush to Rishra to inform father.

### XVIII

I accompanied my parents to Rishra. Father spent the morning of the Independence Day in great anxiety. As morning passed he became restless for the arrival of messengers from Calcutta according to plan. Only after lunch-time, a party of cousins arrived with an air of great urgency. I left my father and pretended to be asleep in another room. As one cousin was speaking to my father, another came into my room and tried to wake me up with the sensational news. I sought to dismiss his report as a joke.

Father's presence in Calcutta was naturally urgently required. I drove him down soon after in the same Wanderer car and took him straight to the Elgin Road house. He heard a full "report" of what had happened. Certain close friends of the family were summoned for consultation. I watched the unfolding drama from the wings. I could see that it was getting hard for father to conduct the "proceedings" in the close presence of our grandmother. So, father moved with the entire assembly to 1 Woodburn Park. He listened to all the suggestions and proposals patiently, sent telegrams here and there and also search parties in different directions. He asked me to join a party to Keoratola cremation grounds and Kalighat temple. I was even persuaded to visit a Baba of Kalighat who claimed to have known that Subhas Babu would eventually renounce worldly life and take to Sannyasa and who promised to invoke the Goddess in the night and obtain information regarding uncle from ethereal sources.



News of uncle's disappearance came out in the Ananda Bazar Patrika and Hindusthan Standard next morning. The police evidently took some time to wake up and did not arrive till the afternoon. They were told the set story of how uncle was living in seclusion and how his disappearance was discovered. I watched a police party going round and round the house and looking for possible routes of exit at the wrong places. Uncle's personal servant noticed that uncle's European pair of shoes were missing and mentioned this to Ila. Ila promptly told him that I had given the shoes away for repairs and he appeared to accept the explanation.

The All India Radio announced in their evening news bulletin that Subhas Chandra Bose had been arrested at Jharia near Dhanbad. Father was extremely upset. He took me aside and asked me if this could at all be possible. I dismissed the report as absurd and he felt reassured. Father put through a trunk call to my brother in Bararee and asked him to go down to Dhanbad and check with the authorities concerned. The latter were non-committal. However the news was contradicted soon after by the Associated Press of India. Foreign radio stations, including Berlin, carried the news of uncle's disappearance the same evening.

For more than two months thereafter, we lived in great anxiety. Time and again, father would call me to his bedroom late at night and discuss whatever reports he had about uncle, reports of what government officials or police officers were saying, of what was heard in unfriendly political circles or even what astrologers were saying. He mentioned to me at this time that he had received word from a friend in the Punjab to the effect that any direct written message from uncle was to be taken to be genuine only if it was in Bengali.

## XIX

At long last, on the 31st March 1941, as I was relaxing and chatting with my mother and sister, father's office boy came in and handed me a slip which read : "Bhagat Ram, I come from frontier". Only after I had carelessly read out the message



rather loudly that I understood. In order to confuse my sister I remarked that a carpet-seller from Kashmir was after me for the last few days and I must dispose of him finally.

I came downstairs and found two men waiting in the hall. One was a fair, handsome and slim young man and the other a rather heavily set older person in European dress. The young man told me softly that he had sent the slip to me and that he had brought Subhas Babu's news. I asked him if he knew my nickname and also if he knew what I was studying. Being satisfied with his answers, I led them to the office room on the Westside. Bhagat Ram told me briefly about his journey from Peshawar to Kabul with uncle, their difficulties in Kabul, etc. He also said that he had left Kabul only after seeing uncle off on his way to Moscow. According to his estimate, uncle should be in Moscow on that very day. He had brought a letter from uncle in Bengali for father and two other writings. He asked me to arrange a meeting with father.

Leaving the visitors in the room, I went to fetch father. In a little while father came down and I led him to the room. Bhagat Ram once again gave a brief account of uncle's journey and brought out the papers. Father advised the visitors not to come to our house any more as the place was closely watched. An appointment was made for them to meet father next morning at Victoria Memorial Gardens. Father asked me to take charge of the papers.

According to father's instructions I took the papers to my room on the second floor and read them. The first one was a one-page letter to father in Bengali, the second was entitled "Message to My Countrymen—from somewhere in Europe" written in ink and dated 17/3/41 and the third a long article "Forward Bloc—its justification" written in pencil dated 22/3/41. I met father later that night with the documents. We were both absolutely certain that they were genuine. The letter to father had to be destroyed just on the eve of a police raid and my arrest in September 1942. The "Message to My Countrymen" was printed and circulated secretly after some time but the original is untraceable. The thesis on the Forward Bloc



has fortunately been saved, published and preserved in the archives of Netaji Research Bureau.

I read and re-read the documents in the night. A great load was thus removed from my mind. What is more, the promise of a great and new future for our country rose before my mind's eye and with it the hope that I may be called upon to play some role in bringing it about.

## XX

This account could end with the arrival of Bhagat Ram with news of Netaji's safe departure from Kabul for Soviet Russia. But certain events that followed are so closely linked with the escape and its ultimate aim that I propose to mention them briefly.

The most important development following Bhagat Ram's visit was the contact between Netaji and my father through the Japanese Consulate in Calcutta in the summer of 1941. One evening father called me downstairs and introduced me to a Bengali gentleman who had come with a message from the Japanese Consul General Okazaki. The latter desired to meet father secretly. The arrangement that father suggested was that the meeting should take place at his garden house at Rishra. I would pick up the Consul General from an appointed place and drive him to Rishra. As arranged, I drove my Wanderer car down to the Princeps Ghat on the Strand. Okazaki arrived there with the Bengali gentleman at the right time and I drove him to Rishra. He had a fairly long conversation with father. Netaji had sent a message in code from Berlin through Tokyo. The message was delivered to father by the Japanese Consul General who in turn carried a reply from father to be transmitted to Netaji in Berlin. Father told me later that he had mentioned in his message, *inter alia*, 'The medical student is all right', to suggest that I was safe. Netaji may have inferred from this that he could use me for future contacts.

Regular contact was thus established between father and Netaji through the Japanese Consulate in Calcutta. Okazaki left after a time and his role was taken over by Consul Ota.



Ota used to come to Rishra with his wife apparently for social visits. I know that maps of Bengal and North-East frontier of India were used during father's conferences with Okazaki and Mr. Satya Ranjan Baksi participated in some of them.

The next direct contact with Netaji occurred in rather dangerous circumstances towards the end of 1943. Father was then in prison in South India and I was in internment in our Calcutta home. One evening one youngman called and handed me a signed message in Bengali in Netaji's own hand. The message was on the letterhead of the Indian Independence League in Syonan (Singapore) and was dated : Sri Sri Kali Puja, the 29th October 1943. The message said that the bearer of the letter was entering India on an urgent and special mission and that Netaji would be happy and thankful if his friends and supporters would help him. The youngman gave his name as T.K. Rao. Rao told me that he had been in the British Indian Army in North Africa and was taken prisoner there by the Germans in the battle of Tobruk. He joined the I.N.A. in Europe at Netaji's call and took special training in secret intelligence work. He was one of the gallant band who followed Netaji to East Asia on a surface ship, a blockade runner, with N.G. Swami. Under Netaji's direct instructions, he had landed with a team from a Japanese submarine on the Kathiawar coast. Members of the team had dispersed in different directions. Rao had instructions to contact me for establishing the necessary secret cell in Bengal.

The three or four persons whose names Rao gave me for further help were not available at the time I therefore decided on my own to link up Rao with the Bengal Volunteer Group through Mr. Sudhir Ranjan Baksi, younger brother of Mr. Satya Ranjan Baksi. I made an appointment with Rao for the following evening at the Metro Cinema. Meanwhile I got in touch with Mr. Baksi. It was arranged that Rao would meet Mr. Baksi during office hours at the Calcutta Corporation where he worked. I conveyed the plan to Rao when we met at the cinema the next evening.

I kept in touch with developments through Mr. Baksi whom



I visited from time to time. With Rao's imported equipment, radio communication was established from Calcutta with Netaji in Rangoon. The joint exploits of Netaji's men from East Asia and the Bengal Volunteer Group in 1943-44 constitute a memorable and heroic chapter of the last phase of our struggle for freedom. The full story, I hope, will be told some day.

In the beginning of 1944 I obtained permission from the Government to interview my father at his detention camp at Coonoor in South India. The restrictive order of internment on me had just expired and I was technically a free man again. My mother and a sister accompanied me. I carried Netaji's message with me. To my great satisfaction, I succeeded in dodging the police officer conducting the interview and showing the letter to father. I also told my father of the developments in East Asia as I heard from Rao and from radio broadcasts from East Asia. It was clear that the Government did not have information till then about the new contact that we had established with Netaji.

Things became increasingly difficult for us during the next few months. New and stringent restrictions were imposed on father as regards correspondence and interviews. At this end, the police were inexorably closing their net around us. Whenever I went out I could see that two men were marching behind me. All this time I was carrying Netaji's hand-written message in my purse. When things looked really bad I passed the letter, in consultation with Mr. Baksi, on to a friend who was in confidence. The latter told me later that he had to destroy the document when he felt that he was also under suspicion.

I was informed that after a police raid at a secret hide-out in Central Calcutta, it was decided to disperse comrades from East Asia to evade capture. Soon thereafter—in October 1944—I was seized by the police from the road one morning on my way to Medical College. After a night's detention at the secret police headquarters at Lord Sinha Road, I was flown secretly in a military aircraft to Delhi. After ten days in the Red Fort, I was transferred to the notorious Lahore Fort where I had to spend three and a half months in solitary confinement and face



relentless interrogation. The charge-sheet that was given to me there read as follows :

No. IV/4/43—M.S.  
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
HOME DEPARTMENT

New Delhi, the 7th November, 1944.

Notice under section 7 of the Restriction and Detention  
Ordinance, 1944 (III of 1944)

In pursuance of Section 7 of Ordinance No. III of 1944, you Sisir Bose are informed that the grounds for your detention are that you were acting in a manner prejudicial to the defence of British India in as much as in collaboration with members of the Bengal Volunteer Group and others, you were actively engaged in a manner calculated to assist Subhas Chandra Bose and the Japanese.

2. You are informed that you have a right to make a representation in writing against the order under which you are detained. If you wish to make such a representation you should address it to the undersigned and forward it through the officer-in-charge in whose custody you have been placed as soon as possible.

Sd/ R. Tottenham  
Additional Secretary to the Government of India

After serving the rest of my prison term in Lyallpur, Punjab, I was released in September 1945 simultaneously with my father. Some time later, another youngman met me at our residence and handed over to me another handwritten message from Netaji in Bengali similar to the one I had received in 1943. There was a difference in that the present one was on the letter-head of the Provisional Government of Free India and the address was Indo-Burma frontier. The bearer of the message told me that he was to have crossed the frontier by the land route the previous year and handed over the message to me in Calcutta. He failed to do so at the proper time on account of



the adverse military situation. He was doing so now to honour Netaji's wishes. This letter has been preserved in the Netaji Museum.

I submit that Netaji's escape from India in 1941 be studied in depth by historians, educationists and all those in charge of building the new Indian nation, not only because it is one of the greatest in history and not merely as a matter of record, but as an example in inspiration and total dedication to a great cause.

**ARZI HUKUMAT E AZAD HIND**  
(THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF FREE INDIA)

ਅਰਜ਼ੀ ਹੁਕਮਤ ਆਜ਼ਾਦ ਹਿੰਦ

-- MEMO.

ਸਰਕਾਰ ਜਿਲਾ ਕੁਰਗੇ ਆਜ਼ਾਦ ਹਿੰਦ ਪਾਕਿਸਤਾਨ। ਅਸਲ ਨੂੰ,  
ਅਰਜ਼ੀ 3 ਅਕਤੂਬਰ 1944 ਮਾਸ ਮਾਸ-ਫਰਵਰੀ, ਅਧਿਕਾਰਿਤ  
ਆਰਜ਼ੀ 3 ਮਈ 1944। ਜਿਲਾ ਪੀਊਰ-ਪਾਕਿਸਤਾਨ

*Facsimile of the second secret message in Netaji's own hand received by the writer after the War.*



# THE GREAT ESCAPE : MY FIFTYFIVE DAYS WITH NETAJI SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE\*

BHAGAT RAM TALWAR

*Pilibhit, Uttar Pradesh, India*

## I

About a fortnight after I got married in May, 1940, Shri Ram Kishan and Shri Achhar Singh Cheena came to see me in my village at Ghalla Dher. They told me that the Kirti Kishan Party wanted to arrange for the crossing over of a very important person of international repute to the Soviet Union and that very sure and safe arrangements were required to escort him across the borders and to the Soviet Union. In those days, following the arrest of Baba Gurmukh Singh, all our contacts in Kabul were broken. It was therefore essential that arrangements should be very sure and fool-proof. The next day all the three of us left for Peshawar to discuss and plan the undertaking.

At Peshawar we met one of our very old contacts, Abad Khan. He was previously in transport business between Peshawar and Kabul. He was at one time the liaison man between comrades in India and Baba Gurmukh Singh in Kabul. He was a reliable, politically conscious and helpful comrade. We discussed with him the various routes to Kabul and the arrangements required for safe conduct. In the absence of a contact in Kabul for a long time the contacts along the various routes were also uncertain. We therefore decided that because of the great importance of the mission, all arrangements should be made *de novo*. We felt that it would take some time to finalise matters and therefore decided to arrange for safe residential accommodation for the V.I.P. at Peshawar till arrangements were complete in all respects. Abad Khan, Ram Kishan and myself started making investigations individually and independently. Within a week each one of us was able to furnish details of arrangements after reconnaissance and study. We exchanged notes. The final route decided upon was from Peshawar to

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Chairman : Dr Alexander Werth



Shabkadar, then to Gandab Valley, Lalpura, Jallalabad, then to Haji Mohammad Amin at Adda Sharif, back to Jallalabad and then to Kabul. Achhar Singh Cheena was deputed to contact the V.I.P. for arranging about his journey to Peshawar. We fixed up a house inside Kissa Khwani Bazar where the V.I. P. was to be lodged. The house belonged to Mian Feroze Shah.

Achhar Singh Cheena informed me sometime later that he had learnt through the press that the V.I.P. for whose escape we were making all these arrangements had issued an ultimatum to the Bengal Government for the removal of the Holwell monument in Calcutta by the 4th July, 1940. We wondered whether it was a change of plan on his part or whether it was meant to divert the attention of the government from his proposed journey across the border. We came to the conclusion that he would not back out of his declared course of action on account of the movement for the removal of the Holwell monument. Achhar Singh met Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose on the 1st of July, 1940 according to a predetermined plan and informed him of the arrangements made for his escape. Netaji was particularly disappointed that he could not immediately undertake his proposed journey on account of the declared agitation over the Holwell monument. He also apprehended arrest and told Achhar Singh that the journey had to be postponed in case he was arrested. Achhar Singh returned to Peshawar and gave us details of his talks with Netaji.

We continued our work of checking up on various routes and establishing contacts on the way. We also decided to send Comrade Ram Kishan to Kabul and further to the Soviet Union to establish contact. He left for Kabul on the 5th or 6th July, 1940. After a month, I received a written message from him from Kabul to the effect that people in Kabul were not in a co-operative mood and did not trust him. He therefore asked for further instructions. At that time most of the party leaders were in prison. It was very difficult for me to get him instructions from party leaders as even those still outside could not be located. Somehow I succeeded in contacting Achhar Singh Cheena. On receipt of my message he came



to meet me in my village. I told him of the situation in Kabul. He said that he had instructions from the party to go to Kabul personally, if necessary. He therefore asked me to go to Peshawar with him and arrange for his journey to Kabul. We went to Peshawar, got in touch with Abad Khan and arranged for his journey. Achhar Singh Cheena also failed to establish contact with the Soviet Union through their Embassy at Kabul. Comrade Ram Kishan and Achhar Singh thereupon decided to cross over to the Soviet Union and make direct and personal efforts on their own for contact with the Soviet Communist Party. They succeeded in reaching the Soviet border. But whereas Achhar Singh succeeded in crossing the river Amu, Ram Kishan was drowned in the attempt. Thus a dedicated son of India laid down his life for the country. Achhar Singh was arrested by the Soviet border security guards who informed their superiors in Moscow about his arrival and conveyed his message. A particular person who knew him during his earlier visits to Moscow was sent to identify him. He was thereafter taken to Moscow. We never heard from him for some time.

## II

It will not be out of place to mention here how Kirti Party<sup>1</sup> undertook this responsibility of arranging for the escape

- 1 Kirti Kisan Party (Workers and Peasants Party) was formed in 1926-27 simultaneously at three places—in Bombay by S.A. Dange, in Calcutta by Muzaffar Ahmed and in the Punjab by Santokh Singh Kirti and Sohan Singh Josh. In 1927 a conference was held in Calcutta under the presidentship of Sohan Singh Josh, at which a decision was taken that workers and peasants should not be organised together. Following this decision the party was dissolved in Bombay and Calcutta. The majority of Punjab members however did not agree with the decision and the party continued there. But as Sohan Singh Josh stood by the Calcutta decision, a split occurred and a separate unit of the Communist Party of India was formed in the Punjab. Meanwhile Santokh Singh Kirti died. Santa Singh captured the Kirti Kisan Party with the support of Baba Karam Singh Cheena and Dr. Bhagh Singh.

The Ghadr Party used to send promising patriots from the United States to the Soviet Union for education and training. On their return to India from the Soviet Union, they mostly joined the Kirti Kisan Party due largely to the influence of Teja Singh Swatantra.

Thus in the Punjab, two parties continued to function. In the beginning of 1942 the two parties were merged and a single Communist Party came into existence.



of Netaji to the Soviet Union. Sardar Niranjana Singh Talib the then editor of "Desh Darpan" was a good friend of Netaji. Netaji told Talib of his plans to escape to the Soviet Union and wanted the help of the Communist party in his escape. Talib was also a close friend of Sardar Baldev Singh, a big industrialist of Tatanagar. Sardar Baldev Singh who was a Minister in the Punjab Government at that time had intimate contact with some of the Punjab Communist party leaders. Talib met Baldev Singh at Tatanagar and told him about Netaji's plans. Baldev Singh readily agreed to help. At that very moment Achhar Singh Cheena was staying with him incognito to evade arrest.<sup>1</sup> Baldev Singh first talked over with Achhar Singh and thereafter arranged his meeting with Talib. The latter conveyed Netaji's plans to him. Achhar Singh wished to meet Netaji to discuss the political aspects of his mission. This meeting was arranged.

Achhar Singh wanted to ascertain Netaji's views on the political aspects of his mission before talking to the party for accepting this responsibility. The discussion between the two was narrated to me later by Netaji during our stay at Kabul. Achhar Singh asked Netaji to tell him the main purpose of his mission. Netaji told him, *inter alia* that in a situation where

- i) the rightist forces within the Congress had succeeded in dislodging him from the Congress presidentship ;
- ii) the leftist forces could not be mobilised against Gandhites on the one hand and the British on the other ; and when
- iii) he was convinced that the British could not be driven out without an armed uprising in India ; and iv) that the second world war created a good opportunity for such an uprising,

he had formulated an alternative policy to secure armed help from a foreign friendly anti-imperialist country, viz, the Soviet Union. Netaji also made it clear that it was only the Communist party which could help him in his escape.

<sup>1</sup> Achhar Singh Cheena went to England as a schoolboy, subsequently crossed over to the U.S.A. where he joined the Ghadr Party. The Ghadr party sent him to Soviet Union later on for studies. He remained there for a considerable time and thereafter returned to India via Kabul. He was one of the top leaders of the Kirti Party in those days.



Netaji also mentioned to me that he had had discussions about his plans with leaders like Rabindra Nath Tagore, Jai Prakash Narain, Lala Shanker Lal, Sardul Singh Caveeshar and others whose opinion mattered. All of them had approved of his plans.

Further, being convinced that his aim could only be achieved through a person of his stature and calibre he began taking practical steps for his escape about February—March, 1940.

After satisfying himself about the purpose of his mission and about Netaji's faith that only an anti-imperialist force like the Soviet Union could render us effective help in our struggle against the Imperialists and for independence, Achhar Singh promised to convey his wishes to the party. The party discussed the issue thoroughly and concluded that Netaji's anti-imperialist views were in consonance with the policy of the party. Moreover, they thought that in the Soviet Union he would be moulded further in the leftist direction. He was a big personality, could be an asset to the anti-imperialist camp and should therefore be given all help. The Soviet Union at one time or another might be in a position to render effective help to our country in the attainment of our objectives. The party decided that his escape should be arranged very carefully taking every possible detail into consideration and taking no risks or chances. For one thing he was an important political figure and that it would be a big slur on the party if he, not being a member of the party, was captured in the attempt to escape. The party therefore deputed very experienced comrades of the calibre of Ram Kishan, Achhar Singh Cheena and myself who had knowledge of border areas and of social conditions of the people there. Netaji also personally knew Achhar Singh Cheena and Ram Kishan and about their work for their party.

### III

Netaji was arrested in the Holwell movement agitation in July, 1940. He must have regretted having launched the movement because of which he had to put off his plan of escape.

While in Jail in Calcutta he was anxious to get out as early



as possible. With this end in view he went on hunger strike. The Government yielded as they could not take chances with his life. Immediately after his release he contacted Talib for renewing the old contacts. But Achhar Singh Cheena had already gone to the Soviet Union and other top leaders of the party were in jail. Hence he could not make any headway in that direction. He decided to call a meeting of the Working Committee of the All India Forward Bloc in Calcutta. Mian Akbar Shah<sup>1</sup> of the North West Frontier Province who was a member of the Forward Bloc Working Committee attended this meeting.

Netaji talked to Akbar Shah about his plan of escape. Mian Akbar Shah told him that he did not himself have contacts in that area but that he knew of a comrade—meaning myself—connected with the Communist party who might be helpful. He told Netaji that I was the younger brother of the great martyr Hari Kishan and belonged to a revolutionary family. He also told him about his close relations with me in connection with our joint work in Ghalla Dher and other kisan movements. Netaji agreed to his suggestion regarding me and worked out secret addresses and code words for exchange of messages in case there was a possibility of help from my side.

On his return from Calcutta, Mian Akbar Shah came to my village and told me about his talk with Netaji and asked me if I could arrange for his escape. I told him that I already had instructions from my party and that I had actually made arrangements for his escape in July, 1940. We decided to go to Peshawar the next day where we contacted Abad Khan again. After our discussion with Abad Khan, Akbar Shah sent word to Netaji that the matter could be arranged.

I started renewing and consolidating my contacts in the area and on the possible routes. We got a message from Netaji that he would be arriving by Frontier Mail at Peshawar on the

<sup>1</sup> Mian Akbar Shah who hailed from Nowshera had been to Afghanistan at the time of the Hijrat Movement. From there he went to the Soviet Union and remained there for some time. On his return to India he was arrested and kept in detention for some time. Upon his release he joined the independence movement in the Frontier Province.



19th of January, 1941. As Netaji revealed to me later, he left his house in Calcutta in the night between the 16th and 17th January 1941 by car driven by his nephew Sisir Bose<sup>1</sup> reaching Dhanbad on the 17th morning. Another son of Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose was a chemical engineer at a place near Dhanbad. He spent the day in his house as a stranger on insurance business. In the darkness of the evening of the 17th January he left along with the two nephews for Gomoh railway station. He got out of the car outside the station and walked up to the station platform alone. He reached Delhi on the 18th evening all alone. During his journey from Calcutta to Peshawar he was disguised as a bearded Muslim Gentleman wearing a fez cap and long coat. At Delhi he boarded the Frontier Mail and reached Peshawar on the evening of the 19th January. According to the plan Netaji got out of the train at Peshawar cantonment railway station. Mian Akbar Shah boarded the same train at the city station to check if Netaji had arrived and to observe if he was being followed. Netaji himself called for a porter at the cantonment station, went out of the station, took a tonga and asked the tongawalla to take him to the Taj Mahal Hotel. Akbar Shah followed him in another tonga. Netaji put up at the Taj Mahal Hotel under the assumed name of Ziauddin.

Netaji later told me about his journey from Delhi to Peshawar. In the same first class compartment Nawab Akbar Khan of Hoti (Mardan) travelled with him. The Nawab kept him occupied with his interesting talk about the wealth of avaricious princes and big industrialists like the Nizam of Hyderabad and others. On being asked about his vocation Netaji told him that he was an insurance agent travelling to Peshawar on business.

Mian Akbar Shah passed by the hotel in his tonga. Later he sent one Abdul Majid Khan<sup>2</sup>, to Netaji in the hotel to inform him that everything was all right and that he would be

<sup>1</sup> a son of Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose and then a junior medical student.

<sup>2</sup> A class-fellow and close friend of Mian Akbar Shah and younger brother of Abdul Quayyum Khan, who later became a leader of the All India Muslim League.



taken from the hotel the next morning. Netaji later told me that it was neither right nor necessary to have sent somebody to the hotel with this information because he was aware of the plan that he would be removed from the hotel the next day.

#### IV

I want to introduce here another patriot who was taken into confidence at this stage. He was Mian Mohd. Shah a landlord of Pabbi, Peshawar District, and a close friend of mine and Mian Akbar Shah. The three of us had worked together in many political struggles including the Ghalla Dher Kisan agitation. He had some friends among afghans who used to come to him every year during the winter. We wanted to utilize those contacts, if necessary, on our journey between Jallalabad and Kabul.

Before Netaji arrived at Peshawar the three of us held long discussions in connection with the escape. In the course of such discussions it was decided that Netaji could neither be sent alone nor entrusted to an ordinary guide, no matter how reliable the guide might be. The general opinion was that one of the three of us should go with him. Since I had built up good contacts in that area and had experience of work of this nature it was thought that I was the most suitable person to accompany Netaji to ensure his safe conduct to Kabul and beyond.

Since I was given this onerous responsibility of escorting Netaji I started raking up my brain about the various possible routes. Originally in discussions with Comrade Ram Kishan and Abad Khan we had decided on Peshawar, Shab Kadar, Gandab valley, Lalpura, Jallalabad, Adda Sharif, back to Jallalabad and Kabul. But, since this route was chosen, an incident occurred on this route which discouraged me. I came to know that British police had arrested a stranger on this route said to be an enemy spy. I therefore suspected that the route must be under strict watch by the British C.I.D. and must not be used. It was a rather difficult and even critical situation.



Because we had Netaji with us already while we had yet to finalise our new route and contacts *en route*. I had to take a quick decision and at the same time be sure of safe conduct. Since Mian Akbar Shah and Mian Mohd Shah had no knowledge of that area there was no point in discussing the matter with them. Abad Khan was the only man who could help me in finalising an alternative route. After some discussion with him I decided upon the following route : Peshawar, Jamrod, Khajuri Maidan British military camp, Afridi and Shinwari tribal areas, Afghan territory, Gardi on Kabul-Peshawar road, Bhati Kot, Jallalabad, Adda Sharif, back to Jallalabad, and then to Kabul. This was an unbeaten track, never used by any of our comrades in the past. We therefore considered it safe for our purpose. Moreover it was the shortest route of all the different routes so far used by revolutionaries crossing over the borders although it was somewhat difficult to negotiate.

We had rented two houses inside Bajauri Gate in Peshawar for Netaji. These houses belonged to Mian Feroze Shah. On the 20th morning Abad Khan shifted Netaji to the house rented for this purpose. All of us avoided visiting him lest we aroused suspicion. During this interlude we arranged for his dress, Afghan currency, medicines and other articles of use during the journey. I had asked for a guide for our trek through the tribal areas and was awaiting his arrival.

I met Netaji for the first time on the evening of the 21st January and explained to him the arrangements made for his escape. He wanted that we left Peshawar as early as possible because after the news of his disappearance leaked out, the police would be alerted all over the country and escape would be difficult. I assured him that we would be leaving early in the morning the next day and explained to him the cause of the delay by two days in leaving Peshawar.

Later at Kabul he told me of his disappointment at seeing me for the first time. He had heard about my work and experience in revolutionary movements, of the sacrifices of my family and of my brother, the great martyr Harikishan. He



had expected to see a robust and tall Pathan. My slim and short frame failed to impress him.

At this meeting we decided that Netaji would be disguised as a deaf and dumb Muslim patient going to Adda Sharif. He would continue to be known as Ziauddin. He was dressed as a Pathan wearing Malasia cloth salwar, kameez, Pathan leather jacket, khaki kulla and lungi as head gear and Peshawari chappals as footwear. He was carrying a Kabuli blanket. By this time his beard was an inch long. With his stature, features and fair complexion, Netaji looked a real Pathan in his beard and new dress. I felt very happy with his effective disguise. I only hoped that he would not by any chance speak a word in public. I must say that he played his role as a deaf and dumb superbly. He was all smiles after wearing his dress. I also took an assumed name of Rahmat Khan.

## V

As arranged by Abad Khan, a guide arrived by the evening of the 21st of January. Early next morning a car arranged by Abad Khan was parked at some distance from the house where Netaji was staying. At about 6-30 a.m. Netaji and I walked up to the place where the car was parked. The driver, Abad Khan and the guide were waiting for us. We took some *parathas* and fried eggs for the journey and carried our blankets on our shoulders. We carried no luggage with us.

We drove to Jamrod. The car was checked at the barrier where Abad Khan signed the register. We then proceeded further to Khajuri Maidan British military camp which was about 11 miles from Peshawar. We got off the car about a furlong from the border with the Afridi Shinwari tribal territory. From this point we walked along a hilly track about a furlong from the military camp. There was a Muslim shrine across the border and many pilgrims used to visit the shrine. We posed as pilgrims. The sentry could see us but he took us to be pilgrims. According to instructions the car waited long enough to let us enter deep into tribal territory. It appeared as if the car was waiting for us to complete our visit to the



shrine and return. We offered prayers at the shrine and then made our way towards our destination deeper into the tribal territory. We were the three of us—Netaji, the guide and myself. We had gone nearly a mile from the shrine when Netaji felt tired and wanted to rest. We had not yet done anything strenuous but the excitement of the mission must have caused a feeling of weariness in him. This is usual in such situations. We sat down for a brief respite. It occurred to me then that may be Netaji did not know that we were already outside British territory and had penetrated deep into the tribal area. When I told him this he immediately felt very happy and relaxed—breathing the air of freedom. I felt sorry that I did not tell him so earlier. We collected some dry wood, made a bonfire, heated our *parathas*, had a quick lunch and then started on our journey again.

When we resumed our journey Netaji was very cheerful and full of energy and vigour. The journey was up hill for some time and then we had to cross a small pass into another hill. After reaching the top we went downhill.

We reached the village *Pishkan Maina* at the foot of the hill by about midnight. According to the custom of the tribes strangers and visitors stayed in the mosques or a common waiting area called Hujra where unmarried young men, strangers and guests spent the night. This is a sort of a public meeting place where men get together in their spare time and chat. Our guide took us to the mosque of the village. The mosque comprised a hall nearly 16ft x 50ft in size with only one small entrance. There were no windows or ventilators. There were nearly 25 men inside. Some of them were sleeping, others were exchanging notes or just chatting before dispersing to their homes. It was a cold night. A fire was burning inside. As we knocked at the door, it was opened and we made our way in. There were no furniture or cots. The floor was covered with a thick layer of dry fire grass which provided some comfort. People inside were either sitting in groups talking or lying on the floor. We also perched ourselves on the floor and told a group of people inside that we were strangers from



Peshawar and wanted something to eat. Two men went out. One brought two pots of readymade tea and the other a few cakes of salted maize bread. By the time we reached this mosque we had already travelled a distance of nearly ten miles, some of it on hilly ground and were therefore somewhat tired and hungry as well. We were very happy that we could get something to eat in the middle of the night in this small village of free tribal Pathans. The village consisted of sixty houses built of stone and timber plastered with mud from within. Although it was a simple meal we enjoyed it. Netaji also felt relaxed and, as he told me later, he was astonished at such prompt response from the people to our request for food. They did not make any enquiries as to who we were and where we were going. We did not have to pay for this food. It is a custom with the Pathans to provide meals and resting place to strangers without charge. And any offer of payment for the food on our part would have caused embarrassment and would have indicated that we did not know their customs and were therefore not Pathans. After taking our food we slept on the floor. The room was quite warm and we did not require any covering.

We had hardly slept for an hour when I felt as if somebody was pushing me. When I woke up Netaji motioned to me to come outside with him. He told me after coming out that he was feeling uneasy because of the stuffy air and smoke inside. He needed some fresh air. I gave him some water to freshen up. He used nasal drops to clear his nose and throat. It was not tactically correct for us to stay out for too long lest that caused suspicion. We went in after some time and tried to get some sleep. We however could not sleep well as Netaji felt suffocated. He was waking up from time to time and went out for fresh air a couple of times. We felt relieved when the night was over.

## VI

At day break on the 23rd January we were given tea and *parathas* by the men there. They also asked us about our



destination. As already planned, we told them that we were masons from Peshawar and were going to the next village for constructing the house of Malik Latif Khan. It is necessary on such missions to anticipate questions well ahead of time and be ready with replies. The answers must of course be consistent. We thanked our hosts in the customary manner and set out on our onward journey by about 9-00 a.m. of the morning of the 23rd January. Since Netaji knew that he was no longer in British Indian territory he was quite relaxed. He never displayed impatience and behaved in a most natural manner. Before starting on the next lap of the journey he asked me if we could arrange a mule for him as he felt that that would help the pace of our progress. Since we had already told our hosts that we were going only to the next village we decided not to ask for a mule in that village but try to get one at our next stop. The next village on our journey was nearly three miles ahead. We reached there about noon. Netaji was naturally not used to walking in rugged terrain. The journey the day before had been tiresome. Moreover, owing to lack of sound sleep the night before he had to rest every now and then. As a result these three miles took us nearly three hours to cover.

This village was slightly bigger than the former one. There were some shops also. Now I wanted to hire a mule for Netaji. We went to an Afridi Sikh shopkeeper and enquired about a mule on hire. He agreed to let us have one of his mules. After some bargaining we settled on a ride upto the first village inside the Afghan border for Rs. 8/- only. He took some time to provide proper cushions for a good and comfortable ride on the mule. Meanwhile we had our meals and some rest. As he got the mule ready he served us with good hot tea and *parathas*. The mule with dry grass packed in sacks for cushions on the back was ready after a while. We bade farewell to the Sikh shopkeeper and started on our journey to the next village which was nearly 10 miles away and within the Afghan border. A mountain range separated Afghan territory from the tribal area and there was a pass at a considerable height across this range with only a narrow track through it. Movement between



tribal and Afghan territory used to be free. The mule ride was a welcome and comfortable mode of travel for Netaji. According to our plan of deception Netaji was not to speak on the route and particularly when a third person was around. People inhabiting the border areas generally indulged in small-scale trade of dubious nature. Therefore they neither wanted to interfere in other peoples' affairs nor did they want any interference in theirs. This mentality of the tribal people helped to make our journey smooth and safe. By about 9-00 p.m. we were at the pass. It was dark but the mule man and our guide were of great help during this part of the journey. They were well acquainted with the track. Our ascent to the top of the pass was from the eastern and the sunny side. On the western side the sun was not shining. On our descent down the western side we passed through dense forest and there was snow on the track. Netaji was taken unawares and the mule slipped over the snow. Netaji fell from the mule but the guide and the mule man immediately picked him up. Fortunately, he was not hurt except for a few minor bruises. Mule ride on descent particularly on such a track is neither safe nor comfortable. Netaji therefore decided to walk down the rest of the hill beyond the pass. We reached the first Afghan village at about 1-00 a.m. on the 24th of January. This was a small village in the foot hills inhabited by the Shinwari tribal clan. Our guide and the mule man knew this village. We also told them that we would need a mule from this village also for a further ride for Netaji till we reached the Peshawar-Kabul road near the village Garhdi. We had planned to stay the night in this village and resume journey in the morning.

The guide and the mule man took us to the house of one of the villagers they knew very well. It was past midnight and cold. We knocked at the door of this one-room house. A man opened the door and after some preliminaries we told him that we were strangers on our way to the next village Gardhi and wanted to spend the night in his village. He was very hospitable and asked us very casually to come in and make ourselves comfortable. There were two cots in the room which also



housed a few goats in one corner. We perched ourselves on one of the cots. The man then lit a kerosene lamp. It so happened that this man had married the same day and was with his bride on the first night of his marriage. He woke her up. She seemed to be pleasantly surprised to see us and offered to cook food for us. We were hungry and therefore we readily nodded assent.

After we had made ourselves at home, we started discussing our next journey. Our host owned mules and we asked him for one for Netaji for the next lap of the journey. He readily agreed to provide this service for Rs. 13/-. He suggested that we left immediately after taking our food and without waiting till after day break, adding very casually that it would be safer to do so. He probably thought that like many other people in the border areas we were also in some business of a dubious nature. We agreed with him and decided to do as advised.

We were amazed at the promptness with which the newly-wed bride cooked and served us food. She served us scrambled eggs and salted *parathas*. I could tell from his expression that Netaji really relished the dinner and felt amused that the bride was taking so much pains to make us comfortable and serve us with really delicious food at that ghastly hour of the night. Though she was modest, she did not display any undue shyness and behaved as if we were her own kith and kin. She was still in bridal dress and was wearing ornaments of a newly wed.

After finishing our dinner we sent back the guide from Peshawar who was to accompany us only upto this point. I wanted to give him a written message in code for Abad Khan. I searched for a piece of paper and pen but we had none. When the bride guessed my problem she took out a ball of thread, removed its wrapping and handed it over to me for writing my message. She poured a few drops of water into her palm, added some indigo to serve as ink and gave me a small piece of stick to be used as a pen. I scribbled the message on the piece of paper and handed it over to the guide who left along with the mule man.

We told our host that we were going to Adda Sharif on a



pilgrimage. But he was still not sure of the purpose of our journey and continued to be suspicious. He insisted that in the interest of our own safety we should complete the next leg of our journey in the darkness of the night. After our dinner we set off for our next halt at about 5 a.m. on the 24th January. The host also accompanied us along with one of his men and the mule. Netaji was riding the mule. The track was on level ground through a non-perennial creek bed. We did not encounter any problems on the way. Netaji was also in good spirits and felt like a free man in a free territory. We reached Garhdi at about 9-00 a.m. This place was at a distance of about 11 miles from our previous stopover. The mule man told us that there was a sacred shrine called Garhdi Baba (Garhdi Ghaus) by the side of the road in the outskirts of the village Garhdi and within the graveyard of the village. He suggested that we first went on a pilgrimage to this shrine. We took his advice and went to the shrine, paid our respects to the Ghaus according to the muslim custom of the area. Immediately after we had offered our prayers, the mule men told us that in case any thing happened to us we should not disclose that we had stayed with them for the night and hired their mule for our use. They also told us that we could call on them in case of need in future also. He probably meant that on return journey also we could depend upon them for help. We felt very happy that we had completed our first objective of reaching Peshawar-Kabul road about 13 miles inside Afghanistan without any uptoward incident.

## VII

From Garhdi our destination was Jallalabad which was about 40 miles away. We wanted to take a ride in a truck from this point to Jallalabad. We did not want to travel by bus because it would not be safe and advisable to travel by a bus from Peshawar. There may be C.I.D. men or acquaintances from Peshawar in the bus. On the other hand, we did not want to sit and wait on the roadside for a ride for anybody to start asking questions. We therefore started trekking along



the road hoping for a passing truck to stop at our request and take us to Jallalabad. Trucks used to pick up passengers on payment. It was a common practice because there was no bus service between villages on the road.

We were just the two of us now. Netaji felt very happy and elated. We had walked only a small distance when I saw Netaji going round and round as if he were on a dance floor. He said, "*Kaisa sunder desh hai ?*"<sup>1</sup> I asked him what was so beautiful about these barren hills and parched land except that the country was free. He answered, "Yehi to bahut bari sunderta hai".<sup>2</sup> Thereafter we started discussing the contingency of our being arrested in Afghan territory. Netaji said that the existing regime came to power with British help and therefore it was very likely that they would hand us over to the British. My reaction was, however, slightly different. I felt that the Afghan Government would take an independent stand on this issue as they themselves fought their struggle against Bacha Sakka who was an ally of the British. That struggle was more against the British than against Bacha Sakka. In their struggle the Indian people sympathised with and helped the present leadership to come to power. Culturally and socially the Afghan people and those of the Frontier Province were very close. In similar cases in earlier times the Afghan Government had taken an independent stand. We had the example of top revolutionaries like Baba Gurmukh Singh and Baba Prithvi Singh and others who were arrested in Afghanistan. They were not handed over to the British. On the other hand they were asked to go to the country of their choice. They asked for emigration to the U.S.A. and that country accepted them. I added that particularly in his case there were still better chances of the Afghan Government taking an independent line because of his national and international reputation and standing. If the Afghan Government handed him over to the British, their own people would resent it because of their sympathy with the cause of Indian independence. They had therefore more to lose than

1 "What a beautiful country !"

2 "That (freedom) is exactly what makes the country beautiful !"



gain by handing him over. Lastly, Afghan tradition and conscience would not allow this. He agreed with my viewpoint but said that in these days the circumstances were somewhat abnormal and therefore we should be prepared for anything. Walking along the road discussing various problems and issues we reached another village Arzanao on the road side. By now we had walked two miles very leisurely. We sat down by the road side for a little rest.

The road cut through a hill at a bend immediately beyond the place where we were sitting. We could not therefore see anybody approaching us from that side of the road. All of a sudden we saw a big robust Pathan with a big moustache coming from that direction. He stopped by us and started asking questions. He wanted to know where we belonged to and what we were doing there. I told him that we were from Lalpura. (Lalpura was a village across the river Kabul downstream about 6 miles from where we were sitting.) I mentioned Lalpura to pretend that we belonged to Afghanistan. Moreover I had some sentimental attachment to that village as a number of close and intimate revolutionary friends from this village were with us in Peshawar jail. And these friends were of great help to our revolutionary comrades in Afghanistan. The man immediately said that we could not be from that village as he himself belonged to that village. Then I told him that we were actually from across the border. I had come with my uncle who was not well. He was deaf and dumb. I was taking him to Adda Sharif for cure of his ailment. He appeared to be satisfied. He said he had some knowledge of medicine and wanted to examine my uncle's tongue. I motioned to Netaji who understood our conversation. He contracted his tongue and put it out. The man wiped his hand with his shirt and felt his tongue. He then said that my uncle's tongue was hard and suggested a cure. He advised us to proceed to Adda Sharif but also try the treatment suggested by himself. His prescription was that my uncle should keep a solution of alum in hot water in his mouth three to four times a day. As we got up and prepared to move, he also got up and said that he belonged to



Lalpura and in case we needed any help we could call on him. I told him that we were going straight to Adda Sharif and on return we might pass via Lalpura in which case we would look him up. We however did not ask him his name or address. We felt relieved after parting with him.

No truck came by. We therefore walked along the road. We had walked for about an hour when we reached the village Basol. We were in the village when a truck came by from the Peshawar side. I signalled to the driver and he pulled up. He however refused to pick us up as he was not going to Jallalabad. He told us that a truck was following and that I should ask the driver of that truck to take us. It was now about 3 p.m. and we were feeling hungry. But there was no tea-shop nearby. We did not want to search for it either. We did not think it wise to enter the village in search of food. Moreover, we were keen to catch a truck and not miss any opportunity of doing so. A little later the second truck came along. This truck was loaded with boxes of tea. I motioned to the driver who stopped the truck and took us on. We sat on the tea boxes. When the truck reached Bhati Kot a village along the road the driver stopped and told us that we could have tea before we proceeded further. We got off, went to a tea shop and had some boiled eggs and tea. Netaji had told me that he did not want to have lunch there but would rather have a good dinner at Jallalabad. Netaji was slightly on the heavier side in build and therefore needed a little help in mounting the truck. He was taking this arduous journey with confidence and faith. He never complained of lack of proper food or conveyance. He suffered all this hardship cheerfully which was a great inspiration to me.

The truck started from Bhati Kot after nearly half an hour. We had driven a few miles when it was stopped by two constables in official uniform. They asked the driver to wait for the Illaqadar (a district official) who was coming from village Char-Deh for Jallalabad. The driver obeyed. We kept waiting for over two hours before the official arrived. A seat in the front was vacated for him. We reached Jallalabad about eight



O'clock in the evening on the 24th of January and looked out for a suitable hotel.

### VIII

Jallalabad is the capital of the eastern province of Jallalabad in Afghanistan. It is one of the bigger towns of the country. The British had their consular office in this city situated on the bank of river Kabul. It is a fairly important commercial town dealing in agricultural products of Laghman valley, dry fruit particularly Chalghoza, rice and timber. New modern buildings and roads were coming up at that time. The new part of the town was built on modern lines with broad roads and alleys. At the time of Amir Habibullah Khan, father of king Amman-Ullah Khan this was the winter capital. S. Daud Jan who later became Prime Minister of Afghanistan was the Governor of this province at that time. There is a busy and crowded bazar along the road displaying merchandise and wares of all sorts. There were many hotels in the town. In the hotels generally, there were no separate rooms for the guests. A big hall, furnished with beautiful thick rugs, was kept warm with the *Bukhari* system of heating. This consisted of a drum-shaped steel hearth with a water-drum on top. An exhaust pipe went through the water drum and then out of the room to take away the smoke. Fuel (wood) was burnt in the steel hearth. Visitors could stay in the hotels as long as they liked and take food and tea in turn at their leisure. They usually took tea ever so often because of the cold. For rest and sleep they lay down on the soft rug in the hall which was kept cosy and comfortable by the heating system. Visitors took their food also squatting on the floor of the hall.

We wanted a separate room so that we could be sure of good sleep. We made a request to the hotel keeper for a separate room. But he advised us to sleep in the main hall as it was warm and comfortable and a separate room would not be so. On our insistence, however, he agreed to arrange a separate room for us and also agreed to provide us with beds when I told him that my uncle was ill and needed a separate room.



I told him that other guests would be put to inconvenience if my uncle was also to spend the night in the main hall. The keeper also provided us with charcoal and *angithi* (oven) for heating our room.

We had a good dinner. Netaji ate to his heart's content. Chicken curry and *kababs* were delicious. Netaji was also served with *pulao*. After the hard day the dinner and the comfortable bed were most welcome. We were asleep by 10-00 p.m. and woke up at about 7-00 a.m. We had told the hotel keeper already that we were going to Adda Sharif early in the morning and wanted tea, eggs and dry *naan* to be served in time. We left the hotel at about 8 a.m. Netaji told me in the morning that he had slept well and he was cheerful.

Adda Sharif is about four and a half miles from Jallalabad. We took a tonga and reached Adda Sharif at about 9-00 a.m. on the 25th January. We went straight to the shrine, offered our prayers in the traditional manner and also made offerings of some cash according to custom. Thereafter we made some discreet and casual enquiries about Haji Mohammad Amin. Meeting him was the main object of our visit to Adda Sharif. Before making enquiries we looked around our own to see if we could trace Haji Saheb. We were told that he was living in the village Lalman where he had his own place of prayer. Lalman was about one and a half miles from Adda Sharif. We set out for this place and by about 11-00 a.m. we were already there.

Lalman is a small and prosperous village with good agricultural land around it. The houses were made of stone masonry in mud, Haji Saheb had a big and spacious house of his own with a *masjid* (prayer annexe) attached to it. On arrival we learnt that he was in the *masjid*. We found him in his private room in the *masjid* sitting on the floor with two of his companions. In the room a thick layer of dry fur grass served as a soft cushion. There were no furniture or fixtures in the room except for a few religious books. This was sort of a study room of Haji Saheb.

We knocked and the door was opened. I recognised Haji



Saheb but he did not recognise me because of my disguise and the long interval of nearly eleven years that had passed since we met last. He enquired who we were and where we were from. We had already anticipated such a situation and had prepared our answers in such a way that he would ask for privacy. I told him that we were from Bajaur Swal Killa. This was the place where our common friends and comrades Sanobar Hussain and Sayyed Ghulam Murtaza lived with Malik Mohd. Ummar Khan. He took the hint, asked the other two men to leave and closed the door. I told him who I was. He immediately jumped up and embraced me. I introduced Netaji to him as a comrade and close friend but did not reveal his identity. He embraced Netaji also. After offering us seats he went inside to give instructions about meals for us and brought some Kabli pomegranates. It was apparent that he was very happy and excited to see us and told me it was better late than never. He meant to say that the world was in turmoil on account of the world war and that only in situations like that countries changed their political structure. Some went down while others shook off their shackles and attained independence. We made ourselves comfortable and had a good talk. For Netaji's convenience we conversed in Urdu. I told Haji Saheb that the main purpose of our visit was to reestablish our contacts and arrange to send this comrade to the Soviet Union as he was a very important figure in Indian political life and very well suited to the purpose. We should now re-assess and regroup all our assets and forces for a determined struggle and a final onslaught on the enemy. I told him that I could come back to him after my present mission was over and would let him know how things had gone and what was required to be done. I told him that at the moment I wanted to discuss with him the details of our onward journey and wanted to know about the hazards on the way and possible precautions that we should take to avoid being apprehended.

Haji Saheb told us that from there we should return to Jallalabad and look out for a truck for a ride to Kabul. Several trucks used to ply between Peshawar and Kabul, but in



case we did not get any we could hire a tonga. Jallalabad was infested with people of all shades and we should not therefore stay there. He further advised us that in case anybody made enquiries, we should say we were men of Naqeeb Saheb. The latter was a religious leader with wide influence amongst the masses as also in the administration. He was generally considered pro-British and therefore nobody would probe deeper. We did not consider it advisable or even necessary to get a guide from Haji Saheb.

I told him that I would be returning in a month or a little later depending on how the situation developed. I wanted to know what and how much help he could give us in our struggle against the British. Haji Saheb said that he always considered the British as his enemy and of the people. He was once before in the thick of the struggle and would not hesitate to be in it again. He said that he cherished the friendship he made with me in jail at Peshawar in 1930. He added that he had heard in jail of the sacrifices of our family and later from Sanobar Hussain and would consider my word as a command for him in the struggle against the British. One of our comrades at Peshawar Mohammad Shah knew some people in this area as they visited his place every year in winter for seasonal jobs. We were not sure that we would succeed in meeting Haji Saheb and therefore we had arranged through an independent contact for a guide from Jallalabad to Kabul before leaving Peshawar. According to our original assessment we were to reach Adda Sharif on the 25th of January. We had arranged with Mohammad Shah that the guide Mohkam Din would contact us at Adda Sharif on the appointed day. We asked Haji Saheb to lend us a man who could trace him out as it would not be correct for us to make enquiries on our own.

Haji Saheb's man who accompanied us to Adda Sharif searched and located Mohkam Din. Netaji, myself and Mohkam Din walked back to Jallalabad by a shorter foot track as we could not get any tonga for our return journey. It was evening when we reached Jallalabad. We gave Mohkam Din some money and asked him to have his dinner and stay the



night somewhere in Chai Khana. We told him that we would be leaving by truck the next morning i.e. the 26th January. He should therefore look for a truck and if possible make arrangements for our ride with the driver. We went back to our room in the hotel where we had spent the previous night. Mohkam Din met us later in the evening to inform us about the result of his enquiries in connection with the truck ride. But he never turned up in the morning. We kept waiting for him but we learnt that he was scared away by the hotel keeper who thought he was a thief.

## IX

Since we had no hope getting a truck ride immediately and we did not want to stay at Jallalabad for too long, we took a tonga and reached the next village Sultanpur about 9 miles from Jallalabad. We did not want to show undue haste and therefore we waited a little and kept a watch on the tonga which brought us to that place. When we saw it start on its return journey to Jallalabad we hired another tonga for our next stop at Fatehabad nearly 14 miles from Sultanpur. Fatehabad was a town of fairly good size with a reasonably large market-place. Here we stopped for lunch. Every eating place in an Afghan town is called a hotel while a tea shop is called Chai Khana. We went to a hotel and asked for *pulao*, chicken and *Naan-i-Khushk*. Netaji relished his lunch. He was gay and confident. We were going according to schedule and hoped to reach our destination Kabul on the 27th of January as expected. It was past noon and we did not notice any truck coming from the direction of Peshawar. We started walking along the road and continued till we reached Mimla Hotel. We were tempted to get in but we avoided it for reasons of safety. It looked like a posh government hotel for tourists, officials, foreigners and state guests. Mimla was a beautiful area with orchards, green fields and flowing water all around. It was a scenic spot. There were several other hotels on the road. We had already trekked nearly 10 miles from Fatehabad and needed some respite and something to eat. We got into



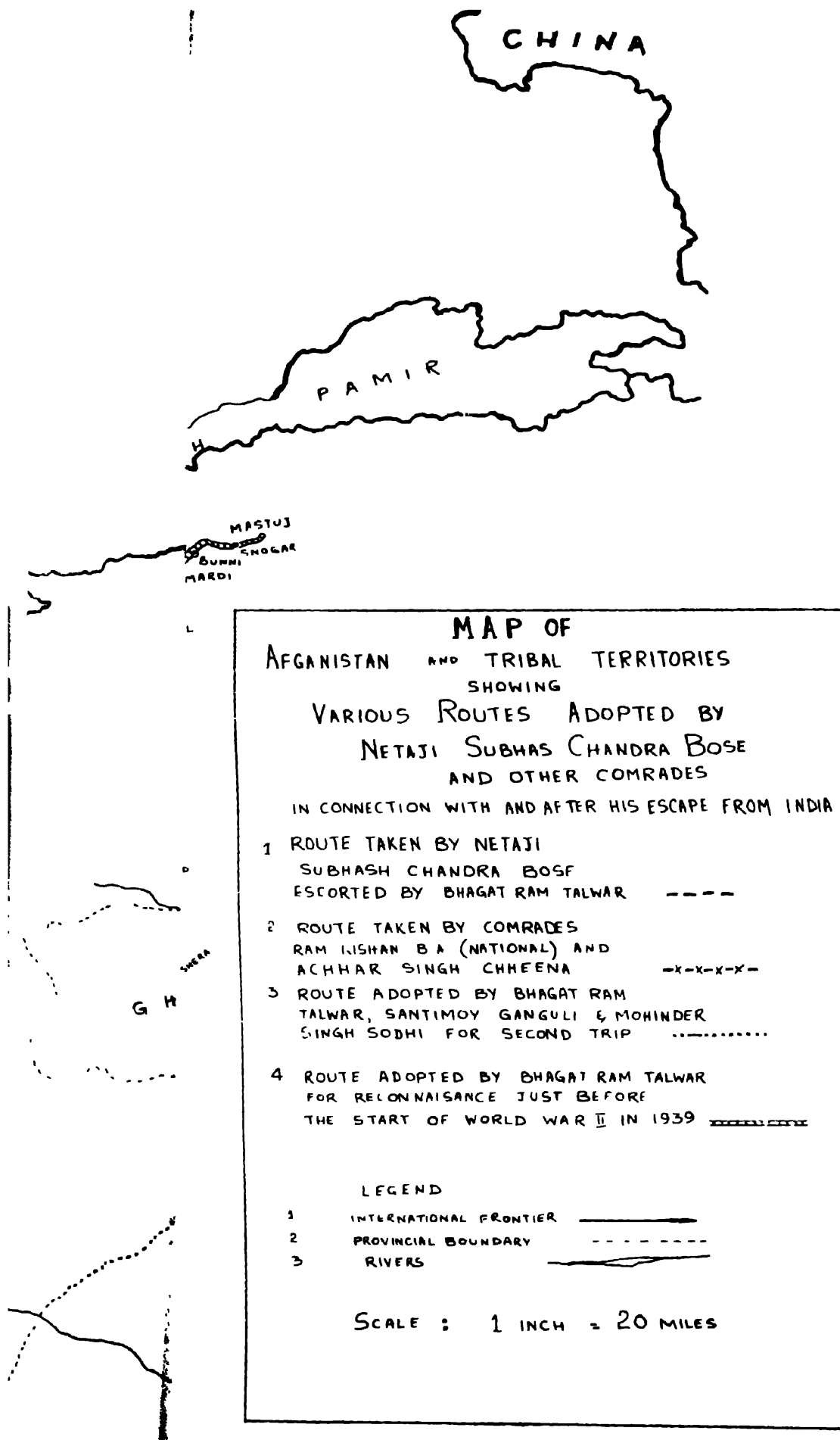
one of these hotels. We intended to stay in the hotel till we got some conveyance as it was already evening and we could not continue our journey on foot.

We asked for some soup, dry Naan and rice. Netaji wanted a light lunch. Before they could bring us our food, we noticed a passing truck. I immediately signalled to the driver to stop. I told the hotel man that we could not wait for our food as we did not want to miss this rare chance of getting a truck-ride. I offered a rupee or two as compensation for the food prepared by them but they did not accept it.

By coincidence this truck was also loaded with tea chests. We got in. At about 9-00 p.m. we reached a place called Gandamak. The truck stopped here for dinner. This was more or less the mid-point between Kabul and Peshawar. The trucks from both sides used to have long halts here. This was an important place for the Khugiani tribe. There were a number of shops and hotels on the road. Drivers, passengers and visitors frequented these hotels. We also went in for our food and asked for a good dinner of chicken, pulao and Naan-i-Khushk. Our truck resumed its drive at about 10-00 p.m. The next leg of the journey upto Budkhak (5 hours by truck) was very difficult and strenuous. We had to negotiate a hilly road at considerable height through the famous Lataband pass. It was also extremely cold. The snow was already there and we were riding on tea chests in an open truck. After the night's journey we reached Budkhak at about 4-00 a.m.

*Budkhak* was an important point where customs and excise officials checked everybody. Foreigners travelling on passport had to get their papers examined here. Other passengers got their names and addresses recorded here according to instructions of the Afghan Government. We were aware of it and therefore we were prepared for it. I requested Netaji to follow the drivers because they did not have to record their names in the register. After Netaji had got into the hotel with the drivers I joined other passengers to get my name recorded in the register. I found that the concerned officials were asleep and nobody was recording anything. Somebody suggested that











since nobody was recording our names we should all get moving across the barrier. I joined Netaji in the hotel. Other passengers of our truck also came to the same hotel. We had our tea and lay down on the floor for some sleep along with the other passengers. We were very happy and relieved to get through the Budkhak check-post. We dreaded this point where generally very strict check was exercised. This time of the night was perhaps the best for crossing this barrier. Netaji was literally laughing. He was so happy at the thought that we had crossed the last check-point without any mishap.

Budkhak was very well known for fruits. This was perhaps the only place in the world where really good quality *Sarda* is grown. Afghanistan is very well known for *Sarda* which is its choice fruit. We were now only 13 miles from Kabul. At about 8-00 a.m. the driver announced that the truck was ready to leave. Other passengers left but we did not want to continue our journey by truck. The truck was still to pass through a customs barrier. And passengers on the truck were usually taken to be long distance travellers viz. from Peshawar. We wanted to avoid any further checks. We also wanted to pose as local people to avoid questioning. We therefore took a tonga for Kabul city at about 9-00 a.m. This was a quite normal and the usual thing to do for local people going to Kabul. We reached our last stop Kabul at about 11-00 a.m. on the 27th of January without any checks on the way. We got off the tonga at Lahori Gate.

## X

The city of Kabul is situated in a valley surrounded by hills. The river Kabul cuts through the city. There are bazars along both the banks. The city used to be protected from enemy attacks by a huge wall constructed many years ago. It is an old wall constructed on the hills on three sides of the city. There are a number of gates in the wall around the city.

We had now to look for a place to stay. There were a few good hotels frequented by visitors, tourists and foreigners. It was not advisable for us to go to such hotels. We looked for



ordinary *sarais* where common folk stayed. A little inside the Lahori gate there was a *sarai* frequented by camel owners. They used to stay there along with their camels. In this *sarai* there were single rooms as well as dormitories. It was an old double storeyed building made of Katcha bricks. Camels were kept in the yard of the *sarai*. No food was provided at the *sarai*. We rented a room for the two of us on the upper floor for 5 Afghanis (about Re. 1/-) a day. We used to get our tea from the shop opposite the *sarai*.

After booking the room we went to the bazar to buy some bedding as the *sarai* provided only two cots. The *sarai* keeper brought us fuel wood and got some charcoal for heating the room. We purchased second-hand cheap woollen garments for Netaji, of the kind generally used by ordinary people of the city.

After making proper arrangements for our living we went out to eat. It was about 1.30 p.m. We noticed a fairly neat eating place displaying steaming hot *halwa* in huge round trays and *katlamas* large, white and round parathas in many layers fried in *ghee*. These were very tempting. We got into the shop and asked for half a paoa<sup>1</sup> of *halwa* and half a paoa of *katlamas* for each one of us. We were most surprised at the quantity served. Each plate seemed almost four times the quantity we had ordered. It occurred to me immediately thereafter, that a *seer* in Kabul was almost eight times the *seer*<sup>2</sup> in India. We acted promptly to cover up our mistake because we did not want to appear as strangers. I asked the waiter to wrap up one plate each of *halwa* and *katlamas* for taking home and distribute the rest in two plates to be eaten there. We realised that we should try to learn the various Afghan customs promptly to avoid such mistakes in future. We took our purchases to our room. They included candles as there was no electricity in the *sarai*.

While we were doing our shopping a news item on the radio caught our ears. It said that Subhas Chandra Bose had disappeared from his home in Calcutta and that a search was

<sup>1</sup> about one-eighth of a kilogram

<sup>2</sup> about one kilogram



in progress to find him. Later in the evening, in the privacy of our room, Netaji narrated to me the plan that he had drawn up in connection with his escape from Calcutta. He said that on receipt of the message that necessary arrangements had been made to take him across the borders, he announced that he would go into seclusion and observe *Maun-brata*<sup>1</sup>, that none would be allowed to visit him during this time. He had already grown a beard to help his disguise. In the course of his narration he referred to the faith, regard and confidence he had in his sister-in-law, Srimati Bivabati Bose, wife of his brother Sarat Chandra Bose. He considered her to be his second mother. He said that in times of difficulty he always turned to her for help and guidance. In regard to his escape he took her into confidence as he did with Sarat Chandra Bose and their son Sisir Bose. With their help he succeeded in defeating the British police. After he had left Calcutta on the 16th of January the impression was sought to be created that he was still in his room in seclusion. He had left instructions that food should be served and eaten in his room in the same manner as when he was there. On the 27th January, he was to appear in court in Calcutta. A day before and ten days after he had left Calcutta his disappearance was announced. Netaji remarked that everything had worked out according to plan. He had planned that in the course of these ten days he would travel across the country and cross the border without the police looking for him.

In the afternoon of the same day and the day after we surveyed the city of Kabul and familiarized ourselves with the bazars, the location of various embassies and other places. With the *sarai* as our starting point we moved in different directions : towards Bazar Pulli-Khishti, Bazar Labe-Darya, Bazar Shah and Babar (where there is the mausoleum of the Moghal king Babar and a beautiful garden around it) and Ali Abbad. We also reconnoitred New Kabul, the Russian Embassy, Gumrak (Customs Office) Shor-Bazar and many other places.

<sup>1</sup> Oath of silence



It was during one of these rounds that Netaji noticed a wayside photographer at the meeting point of Bazar-i-Shahi and Bazar Labe-Darya and told me that we should get ourselves photographed in our new dress. I very politely told him that we should not go in for such photographs at that time. I explained myself thus. His photographs have been published already in thousands. Even the common people were acquainted with his photographs. Now, when his disappearance had just been announced his photographs would be published in large numbers in the press of India. Some may even be published in the Afghan press. If the photographer by chance recognised Netaji in his own photograph by its resemblance to the pictures published in papers and magazines of the city—we would be in great danger. I therefore, was against taking this unnecessary risk. Besides, we could not be sure that the photographer had no connection with the local police, British Intelligence or even the Indian police.

I felt sorry that I was standing in the way of fulfilling this very small wish of such a great leader. I thought within myself that after all this great man from Bengal suffered all the hardship with me in this trip without a murmur—the terrain, the language, the customs and the way of life of this country were entirely alien to him. A man used to good and clean living has had to live in shacks and had to go without food ever so often. His burning patriotism alone sustained him in the plunge that he had taken risking his whole life and career and leaving everything behind.

But, I was very glad to see that Netaji took it very gracefully. He said that he had very little experience of underground life and was not aware of the technical problems. He said he was happy that he had the guidance of a man experienced in such work.

## XI

The purpose of our journey to Kabul was to contact the Russian Embassy there to arrange for Netaji's escape to Russia with their help. Unfortunately, during this period the party



had no contacts with that country through their Embassy in Kabul or through any other source. We had to establish this contact on our own, start a dialogue with them and secure their help in the implementation of our plan to send Netaji to the Soviet Union. During those days there was strict watch over the Russian Embassy. It was not easy therefore to contact the Embassy officials without arousing the suspicion of the Government of Afghanistan and agents of other countries also who maintained careful watch over the activities of one another. At one time we did consider forcing through the Embassy gates without prior engagement or appointment. But we found it very risky because in addition to the Afghan Police guards at the gates there were Russian guards inside the gate. Moreover, we found a number of suspicious individuals in the vicinity of the gate who appeared to be the agents of other embassies and observing all movements in and out of the Embassy. We wanted to ensure that we were not apprehended till we had established contact with the Russian Diplomatic Mission for the arrangements we had in mind. We were disguised as ordinary Afghans to avoid suspicion and as we had to stay in Kabul for some time. Unfortunately, that disguise was not suitable for the purpose of gaining entry into embassies and establishing contact with the missions. This was a very great handicap.

We dropped the idea of entry into the Embassy without prior contact. Netaji was of the opinion that the Afghan Government was under the influence of the British and therefore they would hand us over to the British if we were arrested by them. I had a different view and felt that the Government of Afghanistan would give us option and allow us to go to the country of our choice. But I had to submit to his views on this issue. From the 29th January, we started observing the Russian officials moving in and out of the Embassy to know them by their faces. We had planned to talk to some of these officials during their movements in the city and establish contact in that way. On the 29th of January we noticed one of the officials of Russian Embassy walking out of the mission. We chased him for some distance and made an effort to talk to him



when he was passing through a street leading to Bazar Labe-Darya. I talked to him in Persian and told him that we wanted to give him a message for the ambassador and requested him to pass on the letter to him. We already had this message written with us. This letter was from Netaji addressed to the Ambassador. In this letter Netaji had introduced himself and stated that he wanted to contact the Ambassador in person as he intended to go to the Soviet Union. Unfortunately, we did not get any response. The official said something in Russian we did not understand and went away.

On the 30th January, we again arrived in the vicinity of the Russian Embassy. The building on Kabul Babar road on the right bank of the Kabul river was surrounded by high boundary walls enclosing a big open compound. The double storeyed building of the main embassy was spacious and of old architectural design.

At that time of the year, the city was covered with a blanket of snow. It was cold. We perched ourselves in the sun on the river bank opposite the Embassy from where we could have a good view of it. It was not unusual for people to sit at that place in the sun. After some time we saw two Russian ladies in their usual European dress come out of the Embassy. We watched them and followed them to the Bazar Labe-Darya. When we saw them slow down probably for getting into a store, we took the chance and tried to draw their attention. I addressed them in Persian and told them quietly that we had been trying to contact the Russian Ambassador but had not met with success. I further told them that we wanted them to take a message from us to the Ambassador. I tried to pass on the written message to them but they only shook their heads, said nothing and went their way. This was the same message that we tried to pass to the Russian gentleman a day before. This kind of treatment on two occasions from the Embassy staff confirmed our view that they had instructions not to get involved in discussions or to have contacts with, the local population in this manner.

We came back to our *sarai* very disappointed. It was



evening and very cold. We lit the fire in our small room. I took my seat on the same cot with Netaji so that we could talk without anybody overhearing us. We reviewed the whole situation and discussed our next step and plans for the next day. I knew that the Russian Mission had a trade agency in Bazar Shahi about half a mile from the Embassy. I had this information before leaving India. We thought that it would be less risky to contact the trade agency, as Afghan nationals frequently visited that office for business. By now we were hungry. I went out and brought some fried fish, Afghan Naan, and meat stew from the hotel in the bazar. Our food was different from the usual food of a ordinary Afghan nationals. Therefore, to avoid suspicion, we did not go to the restaurants. After dinner we chatted for sometime before going to bed. We were handicapped in many ways. It was not possible for me to let Netaji go to these offices for two reasons. Firstly, there was the language problem. The Russian staff generally did not know English although they could converse in Persian. Secondly, it was not correct to take the risk of his being arrested. Although it was left to me to make contacts, Netaji wanted to make sure that no serious or uncalculated risk was taken. Because, if I was arrested, he would be left alone and that would create a desperate situation. Things were thus very difficult for us. But we had to go on trying and establish some contact as early as possible. We could not continue to stay in the *sarai* and in the city of Kabul for too long without getting arrested. And Netaji wanted to avoid such a situation at all costs because he was of the firm opinion that Afghan Government would hand us over to the British, frustrating all his plans.

The next day, the 31st of January, we took a stroll in the streets and Bazars of the city and located the office of Russian trade agency. During the day we kept a watch around the office and observed those going in and coming out to find out if it would be considered usual and normal for Afghan nationals (as we were disguised) to visit the office. The office consisted of a two storeyed building in Bazar-i-Shahi. The



building was just like any of the stores in the bazar. We thought it would be all right to try to contact the Russian Trade Agent.

The next day, the 1st February, we went back to the office of the Trade Agency. There was a fruit shop by the side of the agency. I pointed towards a man and enquired of the shopkeeper who confirmed that that was the Trade Agent. We followed him for some distance and at an opportune moment approached him. I told him that we were from India and wanted to go to the Soviet Union. I requested him to take our message to the Ambassador. He told us that for this purpose we could go directly to the Soviet Embassy Secretariat. This disappointed us very much. But we thought it over and felt that there could be several cogent reasons for such a reply from the Trade Agent. First, it may just be that the attitude was similar to that of the Russian Embassy official and the two Russian ladies we approached a couple of days ago. Secondly, it could be that the Trade Agent considered us to be just ordinary applicants for visa for a visit to Soviet Union and which was the business of the Embassy. Anyhow, our efforts in the above direction also failed.

We felt like two wanderers lost in the woods. At times, Netaji felt very dejected but he never lost his sense of humour. He would say "*Rahmat Khan, ab kaya hoga ?*" I was optimistic as always because I was convinced that even if we were arrested, the Afghan Government would keep to its Pathan tradition and respect its obligation to the Indian people for their support and sympathy for Afghan independence. Further, I was sure that in consideration of the position and status of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose they would not hand us over to the British but give us the option to go to the country of our own choice.

During our strolls and in the *sarai* we went on discussing and planning our next step. By now, we were almost convinced that it would be impossible to establish the right kind of contact with the Russian Embassy. At one time we did consider barging into the Russian Embassy, both of us together.



But we eventually thought that that would be too great a risk in view of the experience we already had. Therefore we started thinking of alternative possibilities. These included establishing contact with diplomatic missions of some other countries, which might lend us support in safely escorting Netaji to Russia.

## XII

Germany was then at war with Britain. And Netaji's plan to wage an armed struggle for independence might suit the interest of Germany in so far as the war against the common enemy was concerned. At the same time, Russia and Germany were on friendly terms, having a non-aggression pact between them. We concluded therefore that Germany would definitely help us in their own national interest. From this viewpoint, we decided to try to contact the German Mission. We thought out a detailed plan of action before the actual visit to the German Embassy. According to this plan, both of us were to go to the German Embassy. Netaji alone was to enter the embassy and I was to come back to the *sarai* after making sure of his successful entry. If I did not hear from him or about him during the day, I was to assume that everything had gone all right, the German Mission had taken him under its protection and had agreed to provide him safe conduct. Since in that case it would be my last day with Netaji and I was to come back to India thereafter, he gave me necessary instructions and messages for India before we set out for the German Embassy. Netaji wrote out an article in English and a letter in Bengali and passed them on to me to be delivered to Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose, his elder brother in Calcutta. He gave me detailed instructions as to how I was to go to Calcutta and contact Mr. Bose. He wanted to make sure that I dodged the Calcutta police successfully and reached Mr. Bose safely. He told me that I was not to go to Calcutta direct. I should get off at Burdwan and take a local train to Calcutta from there as there was a careful watch on the long distance trains by the local police. I was to stay in a hotel in Calcutta. Clients generally



visited Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose in the evening. I was therefore to drive in a taxi to 1, Woodburn Park in the evening appearing like one of the clients and ask for Sisir Babu (Sisir Kumar Bose). In case he was not there, I should ask for Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose. I was to deliver the article and the letter and also narrate to them the whole story of Netaji's escape. He also gave me one letter for Sardar Sardul Singh Caveeshar, the then president of the All India Forward Bloc.

We were very hopeful of the success of our mission to the German Embassy. We were fairly confident that Netaji would be given protection by the German Embassy. We therefore made prior arrangements for contacts between the two of us after such protection was given to Netaji in the German Embassy. It was arranged that I would come to the bridge on the river Kabul near the customs Office (Gumrak) at 4.45 p.m. the same day. Netaji would send a messenger or come personally in the company of the German Embassy officials for any message or further instructions that he might like to pass on to me.

The next day, the 2nd February, we left our *sarai* to locate the German Embassy. During our rounds of the city since the day of our arrival we had noticed many other foreign missions but not the German Embassy. We did not think there was any risk in asking about its location and therefore we enquired of a shopkeeper about the 'German Safarat'. He asked us to cross the bridge by the Russian Embassy, turn right just before a bend in the road and look out just after passing the Japanese Embassy. We knew the way to the Russian Embassy very well and therefore we did not lose much time in the search. Just after we passed the Japanese Embassy across the river we noticed a car flying a foreign flag coming from the direction of new Kabul. We discovered that it was the car of the Russian Ambassador. The car was held up in the snow near the bend of the road just ahead of us. I immediately told Netaji that it was the Russian Ambassador and that we should talk to him. I approached the ambassador who was in the car and told him that I wanted to talk to him. When he nodded I told him that



we were from India and that my companion who was standing a few feet behind me was Subhas Chandra Bose. I told him further that he might have heard about the disappearance of Subhas Chandra Bose from India. I added that we had come here for the only purpose of contacting him for the safe conduct of Subhas Chandra Bose to the Soviet Union. I talked to him in Persian and he understood the burden of my talk with him. He, however, asked me how I could prove that it was Subhas Chandra Bose and none else. I asked him to take a good look at Subhas Chandra Bose who was then disguised as an Afghan national. I also told him that he might have seen his photographs in the papers and magazines and could check them with this gentleman. He took a good look at Netaji who was a few feet away from us. He was quiet for a while and then drove away. New hopes which had arisen in our hearts were thus nipped in the bud.

On that day we had come all this way in search of the German Embassy. But we did not consider it safe to turn to the German Embassy immediately after our talk with the Russian Ambassador. We continued our journey towards New Kabul. After some time we came back and went to the German Embassy located behind the Japanese Mission. The German Embassy was also surrounded by high boundary walls and the gates were manned by Afghan Police Guards. When we were only a few feet from the gate I stopped while Netaji proceeded towards the gate and motioned to the guard for entry. I accompanied him upto the gate with an application in my hand just in case the guard made any enquiries.

I was to tell the sentry that my companion was ill and deaf and that he had a nephew serving in the German Embassy at Teheran. As my companion had not heard from him for a long time, he was worried. He had come with an application to the Embassy asking for enquiries from Teheran about his nephew. The guard, however made no quiriies. The gate opened and Netaji entered. I was happy that Netaji got a safe entry into the Mission and was hopeful that this time our attempt would succeed.



As I turned back, I noticed an Afghan national at some distance. He had been watching us and now approached me. I suspected him to be an anti-German British spy. He continued to follow me. When I took a turn towards the bazar after passing the Japanese Embassy he could not see me any more. Thereafter I walked briskly and entered the bazar and mingled with the crowd. I also quickly took my coat off and wore it inside out, the inside colour being different from that of the outside. I walked for some distance through different streets and then came back into the bazar. I thus gave the man the slip.

I felt particularly relieved and happy at the thought that a very great responsibility had been taken off my shoulders. I could see success of our mission round the corner. In a happy and gay mood I went to a good restaurant where I asked for a good meal and ate to my heart's content. I took it very leisurely and after quite some time I strolled back to our abode in the *sarai* inside Lahori Gate. I never expected what was awaiting me there. I was most surprised to see Netaji sitting on the floor of the verandah of our room. He was waiting for me as the key to the room was with me. I immediately opened the door and got in. I found Netaji very upset. He said that we might be apprehended and arrested any time now. I asked him if he was followed by anybody. He did not think he was. But he suspected that his entry into the German Embassy and return therefrom might have given cause for suspicion to the agents of other embassies. I told him of my experience and about the man who chased me. My view was that the agent, if any, was following me, therefore, there was possibly none to follow him. I therefore felt that his fears might not have any basis.

After we had settled down in our room he told me about his experiences in the German legation. There he met a young German official, revealed his indentivity and told him the purpose of his visit. This German official was happy and excited to meet Netaji. He even showed him a number of photographs of him which had appeared in the newspapers and magazines.



The young German also arranged for his meeting with the German Minister to whom Netaji again explained the purpose of his visit and asked for shelter. Netaji also told him that he felt quite unsafe in the city and might be apprehended any moment by British agents or the Afghan police. He therefore asked for protection of the German legation till arrangements could be made for his safe escort out of that country.

The German Minister said that he was happy that Netaji came to them for protection. He told Netaji that he had seen him in the German Foreign Office during his earlier visits to Berlin when he was working in the foreign office. He assured Netaji that he would immediately contact Berlin for instructions. He also hoped for a positive response from Berlin and said that it would take about three days to get word back from Berlin. Till then he could not take any further action in the matter. As to affording him protection till his safe escort out of the country, the German Minister said that a large number of his employees were Afghan nationals. They would become suspicious if he stayed in the legation. That would make things difficult for everybody. The Minister advised Netaji to see one of their men Herr Thomas the local representative of Siemens, in his office after three days. The Siemens office was near the Customs office on the bank of river Kabul. He expected that instructions from Berlin would arrive by then and be duly passed on to Herr Thomas.<sup>1</sup>

According to the above arrangement we were to wait till the 5th of February before contacting Herr Thomas. Unfortunately, our problems kept on mounting in the meantime and the success of our mission appeared to be very remote.

We had to mark time till the fifth before we went to Herr Thomas for news from the German legation. As we did not think it was safe to remain in the room all day, on the 3rd and 4th February we went round the various bazars and other places in the city. Having nothing else to do we spent the

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 1(a) for text of German Minister's secret despatch to Berlin of 5 February 1941 in which he mentions Russian Ambassador's suspicion that Netaji's journey was a British plot. Ed.



afternoons and evenings in our room in the *sarai*. Netaji narrated to me at this time his experiences in the Congress party and the circumstances which led him to quit the Congress organisation and form the Forward Bloc. He also gave me his impressions of various top Congress leaders including Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel and Babu Rajendra Prasad.

A difficult and serious situation developed in the evening on the 4th when we were relaxing in our room in the *sarai*. An Afghan national in ordinary dress came to our room and started making enquiries. He wanted to know who we were, where we came from and what was the purpose of our visit to Kabul. He told us that he belonged to Afghan Police. I told him that we belonged to Lalpura<sup>1</sup>. Pointing at Netaji I told the intruder that he was my uncle who was ill and that I had brought him for medical treatment. I further told him that we were staying in the *sarai* because we could not get accommodation in the hospital or elsewhere. He wanted to know what was the problem with him. I told him that my uncle had some paralytic problem of the tongue and on account of this he could neither hear nor speak. He did not seem to be convinced. He said that he would come again and asked for some '*chai-pani*'. I readily agreed and offered to send for tea. He said that I need not bother and that he would take tea in *Chai Khana*. Thereafter when I tipped him with two Afghan rupees (equivalent to 44 paise) he left repeating that he would come again.

We did not like the officious tone of this new visitor and it gave us the creeps. The incident caused considerable worry to Netaji.

Next day, the 5th February, we were to go to see Herr Thomas of Siemens as arranged with the German Minister. We left our *sarai* after breakfast to locate the office in the Gumrak area. After some search we located the office but it

<sup>1</sup> Lalpura is a medium sized village on the bank of river Kabul in Jallalabad province of Afghanistan. The village is near the border with the tribal area. I had some contacts who belonged to this village.



was still too early. We strolled in the bazars till it was 11.00 a.m. when the office was to open. Inside the office we noticed a young German who, as we learnt later, was a radio Engineer and a few employees who were Afghan nationals. We went straight to this German Engineer. I enquired of him about Herr Thomas. He did not seem to understand Persian. Thereupon Netaji talked to him quietly in German. The German Engineer told Netaji that Herr Thomas would be coming in about half an hour and that we could wait for him in the office. We, however, thought it better to go out and come back after some time. When we returned the German Engineer took us to Herr Thomas who was expecting us. Netaji introduced himself disclosing his identity to Herr Thomas and thereafter introduced me. Netaji who talked to him in English asked him if there was any message for us. Herr Thomas said that they had received a message from Berlin to the effect they were very glad to learn about Netaji's escape. The message also said that they were making arrangements for his safe conduct from Afghanistan and that all possible help would be given to Netaji. Herr Thomas asked Netaji to see him again after three days for a further message and instructions from Berlin.<sup>1</sup>

We were glad to learn that Berlin had offered safe conduct. But we wanted quick action because Netaji worried about his safety in the city. We expressed our feelings to Herr Thomas and told him that our prolonged stay in the city was not free from danger and that we were afraid of being arrested. Netaji made a request for necessary protection to us till the safe exit from Afghanistan could be arranged. Herr Thomas, however, said that it would not be possible for him to arrange for our protection but that he would convey our feelings to the German Legation. He offered us financial help. But we told him that we did not need such help. Herr Thomas repeated that Berlin was very happy over the escape of Netaji and assured us of speedy arrangements for safely escorting him out of Kabul. We fixed our next visit with him for the 8th February.

<sup>1</sup> see Appendix 1(b) for secretary Woermann's note of 8 February 1974 to German Foreign Minister



Netaji told Herr Thomas that he might not come to him personally for the next visit. He told him, pointing towards me, that Rahmat Khan would come to him for further messages.

### XIII

After the visit with Herr Thomas we took a stroll in the bazar till it was time for lunch. We took a hearty lunch in a restaurant in the bazar and returned to our room in the *sarai*. While in the bazar, it struck me that Netaji's dress was not quite like that of an ordinary Afghan national. I therefore decided to purchase a top coat for him which would cover up his dress. We also needed some other garments to keep us warm and to protect us against the snow and the extremely cold weather. I left Netaji in the room to relax and went to a Hindu Afghan garment dealer. I purchased a used top coat for Netaji, socks, pyjamas and used goloshes for the both of us. I generally made purchases from the same shop.

After the visit of that Afghan spy and in anticipation of his impending second call I was thinking of shifting to a safer place. But I could not think of any place where we could be reasonably comfortable as well as safe. It occurred to me that Uttam Chand Malhotra a relation of some of my village folk and a former active member of Naujawan Bharat Sabha, who was in jail with us in 1930 at Peshawar had shifted to Kabul and set up his business there. As a matter of fact, during one of our rounds in the bazars earlier, I had searched for his shop on both sides of Bazar Labe Darya and had noticed a sign-board on a shop in the following terms : 'M. C. Uttam Chand.' But I was not sure if the owner was the same person. Since we were in a tight corner now, I wanted to contact him for help. I therefore, enquired of the Hindu garment dealer if he knew Uttam Chand Malhotra. He told me that he was a dealer in crockery and radio in Bazar Labe Darya and the sign board on his shop was of the above description. I collected my purchases and went toward the shop of Uttam Chand. After surveying everything I came back to the *sarai*. I had been in our room hardly an hour when the Afghan spy made his



second appearance. He asked us to come with him to the *Kotwali*.<sup>1</sup> I told him that there was no point in our going to the *Kotwali* and repeated my story about the problem of getting a bed in the hospital for my uncle. I also requested him more firmly not to harass us unnecessarily. He said that he had informed the *Kotwali* about us. I told him that he was creating problems for us and annoying us without any reason. I pleaded with him that it did behave him to harass strangers who had already so many problems. I now offered him his 'sharbat' of 8 Afghanis (2 Rupees) and requested him to leave us alone. He left saying that we should get admission to the hospital as soon as possible ; otherwise some one else also might be after us. From his talk we gathered that he genuinely suspected us of being smugglers or of being engaged in some illicit trade.

After his second visit we were convinced that we must leave the *sarai* without much delay. Netaji was very keen that we immediately made some alternative arrangements. I racked my brains but could not just think of any place in Kabul where we could shift to and be safe. Netaji and I had long talk about it but we could not decide on our next step. Shri Uttam Chand came to my mind but I did not mention him to Netaji because I was not sure of him and his present views. It was nearly 11 years since we met last. Since then there could be many changes in the thinking, loyalties and interests of a person. I wanted to make some discreet enquiries about him in the first instance to make sure before I mentioned him to Netaji. We also considered the alternative of shifting from village to village and taking refuge in mosques for two to three days in each. But we concluded that that would not suit us because that would make it very difficult for us to keep in touch with the German legation in Kabul. Although the alternative of shifting to another *sarai* was not considered to be very safe step either, yet we chose to do so in the absense of any other. We had our dinner and went to bed.

On the 6th February, we wanted to go out and look for a

<sup>1</sup> Police Station



suitable place in the city which would be safer. I did not think it was necessary for Netaji also to come along for this search, I therefore, asked him to rest in our room for the day while I went out in search of accommodation. To avoid suspicion I locked the room from outside and went out. In Kabul there are a very large number of *sarais* patronised by the small traders and village folk from the outlying areas. I visited most of them but did not like any of them. One was as good or as bad as the other. Except for lunch break with Netaji back in our room I kept on my search till the evening. In the evening I gave Netaji my impressions and report of my visits to these places and told him that we would not be better off in any of the places I had seen. I added that we should not be too afraid of the spy because it was obvious that he was only after some money from us and that his ends would not be served by handing us over to the police. Only that we might have to give him bigger and bigger bribes every time he called on us. When Netaji heard this he felt happy and relieved. He said my analysis was convincing and, therefore, there was no need to take this man too seriously at least for the time being. We, however, decided that we should continue our search for an alternative place, so that we could shift as and when we found it necessary even if it was to be to some other *sarai* as a make-shift arrangement.

On the 7 February, I continued my search for accommodation in the same manner as the day before. I located some houses which were available on rent. But I did not consider it proper to shift to any such house. The neighbours could get suspicious. To have a place for a possible emergency, I selected and rented a room in a *sarai* which was patronised by fruit growers from rural areas. I placed some fuel wood in this room, locked it and came back to our room in the *sarai* inside Lahori Gate. In the evening the same Afghan spy again made his appearance.

Immediately on arrival the spy asked us to accompany him to the *Kotwali*. I became very angry and told him in an excited tone that we would not go with him to Kotwali or any



other place and that he was free to do whatever he liked. From the expression on Netaji's face I noticed that he did not like my way of handling the situation and wanted me to try persuasive methods. I told the spy that no purpose would be served by our going to the *Kotwali* and asked him to tell us plainly what he wanted from us. The spy then became more polite with me and told me that I should not be angry with him as we were both Pathans and should be friends. He said that he wanted a gift from us as a token of friendship, which would be enduring and serve as a perpetual reminder of our friendship. He started on a long sermon on the brotherhood of Pathans facing Netaji. Netaji made a gesture to suggest that he could not follow him and that he should instead address me. Netaji played his part as a deaf and dumb person superbly. I told the spy that if he wanted some money as a token of friendship, I could not afford to give him more than 15 Afghanis. He did not agree. Gradually I raised my offer to 40 Afghanis and said that it was the limit for us 'poor people' and strangers to the city. I added that we had come to Kabul for treatment of my uncle and that he should not fleece us on the plea of friendship.

The spy said that he was not interested in money. He wanted something of a lasting nature that would remind him of our friendship. I noticed that he was looking at the wrist watch I was wearing. He pointed at the watch and asked for it. This watch belonged to Netaji. He had given it to me during our journey through the tribal areas. It was a round gold watch with a thick glass and the figure 12 in red. It seemed to be an expensive watch. Moreover if I remember aright, Netaji had told me that it was a present to him from his father. I knew he had a sentimental attachment to the watch and I was therefore very perturbed when the spy asked for it. I was not prepared to part with it at any cost and told the spy that we needed it till at least the treatment of my uncle was over. The spy, however, continued to insist. Netaji judged the situation and he made a gesture suggesting that I should hand over the watch to the spy. We had to part with the watch in this manner.



After he got the watch, the spy left us stating that now we were friends and offered to help us in times of need.

I was very upset over the loss of the watch because of its value to Netaji. I was boiling within me. But Netaji tried to pacify me and consoled me by saying that such things could happen in the position we were in. He further told me that as I had myself said already, the man was after a good bribe and that he would not harm us by reporting on us. I was silent for quite some time till I told Netaji that we should not delay on our future course of action. The next day we were to meet Herr Thomas for any message from Berlin. Just in case we did not get any positive reply or help from them, we decided that we would adopt one of the following courses :

1. To contact Uttam Chand for help. This was the first occasion that I mentioned Uttam Chand to Netaji. I told him how I knew him. I also told him about his arrest in 1938 at Peshawar on account of his work in the Nau-jawan Bharat Sabha. I did not know about his activities since. But, then, we were in such a difficult position that we must make some alternative arrangements.
2. To shift to the other *sarai* where I had already rented a room.
3. To try to proceed further and cross the Russian border on our own in the same manner as we passed through the tribal areas during our journey from India to Kabul.

After considerable discussion we arrived at the decision that in case we found that there was further delay in arrangements by the German Legation we should contact Uttam Chand for help.

#### XIV

On the 8th February, according to prior arrangement, I went alone to the office of Siemens and Co. to contact Herr Thomas for any message from Berlin. He told me that he had had a talk with the Minister that morning. The Minister had told him that no message had yet been received from Berlin but that he should help us in any manner he could. I told him



of our predicament and narrated to him how the Afghan spy was chasing us. I again told him that our stay in the city was not safe and that it was necessary that very prompt arrangements were made for the safe conduct of Netaji out of Kabul. Herr Thomas told me that he would convey all this to the Minister and asked me to see him again after three days. I came back and apprised Netaji of my talk with Herr Thomas. We went for lunch thereafter. After returning to our room we decided that I should contact Uttam Chand. I went straight to Uttam Chand's shop. I found him in his shop reading a newspaper. There was another young boy with him. So I started speaking with him in Pushto. I recognised him but to make sure I asked him if he was from Peshawar. He replied in the affirmative and asked me the purpose of my visit. I told him that I had a message for him from Peshawar. I was all this time looking at the boy. He took the hint and sent the boy out to fetch some tea. After the boy had left I told him that he had failed to recognise me. I revealed my identity and told him that I was the younger brother of martyr Harikishan and belonged to the village Ghalla Dher where his uncle had married. I also reminded him that we were together in jail at Peshawar in 1930. After he had recognised me, he gave me a vigorous hand-shake and embraced me. He was very excited and asked me how was it that I was in Kabul. I told him that I had come on a very important political mission together with a very important person from India. I explained to him the difficulties we were facing with regard to our stay in Kabul and asked him if he could help us solve our problem. When he asked me what help we needed, I told him the whole story and also told him that the person accompanying me was none other than Subhas Chandra Bose. He was overwhelmed at the mention of Netaji's name and wanted to know more about our mission. I told him that our immediate problem was of a safe shelter in Kabul. As to the details of our mission he would come to know in due course. He suggested that we might seek the help of some old revolutionaries in Kabul. But when I told him that we had no time to waste and that our problem needed



immediate solution, he offered to give us shelter in his own house. I asked him about the location of his house, if it would be a safe shelter and if his political views were known in the area. He assured me that his house was in safe locality and that nothing was known about his political views in the area. I told him that we would shift to his house the same day. We would arrive at his shop at 4-45 p.m.. From the shop he was to escort us to his house.

I came back to the *sarai* and reported details of my talk with Uttam Chand to Netaji. He was very happy that such arrangements could be made. He even said that he should have taken this step earlier to avoid harassment by the spy. I explained that Uttam Chand's political involvement was in the remote past and that I was not sure of his present political views. We made plans for shifting from the *sarai*. We decided that we would leave our luggage back in the first instance. I paid the balance of the rent to the Chowkidar and left the place at 4-15 p.m. on the 8th February. Netaji went first. I kept observing from the terrace if he was followed. I did not find any body chasing Netaji. Thereafter I left the *sarai* and caught up with Netaji. It was arranged that Netaji would not come to the shop but take a stroll in the bazar opposite the shop on the other side of the river. I, in the company of Uttam Chand, was to walk in the direction of the bridge Pule-Khishti and Netaji was to approach in the same direction from the other side of the river. I would join Netaji on the bridge and both of us were then to follow Uttam Chand. Netaji was not to be introduced on the way. When I reached Uttam Chand's shop he was alone. He had sent the boy to buy meat and vegetables with instructions for dinner at his house for two guests. Every thing went according to plan. It was quite dark when we reached Uttam Chand's house.

On arrival we were taken upstairs straight into the room furnished for us. I introduced Uttam Chand to Netaji. Uttam Chand bowed to him and then embraced him. After some time his wife was also introduced to Netaji.

The residence of Uttam Chand was in the upper floor of a



two-storeyed building in Mohalla Hindu Guzar. The ground floor was occupied by one Roshan Lal, a Hindu from Peshawar. The house consisted of three rooms in addition to the kitchen and bath rooms. The two of us were given separate rooms well furnished in Central Asian style. The floor was covered with durries and carpets. There was a *Sandli*<sup>1</sup> in the middle of the room and three thick and low mattresses with cushions around the *Sandli*. These were used for seats and also as beds at night. Netaji and I used two of these mattresses while the third one was taken by visitors or Uttam Chand, his wife and children when they joined us.

Immediately on arrival we were served with tea. Uttam Chand turned on the radio and it so happened that Bengali music was being played. It is a tradition there that neighbours and friends call on new guests. Accordingly, the neighbour Roshan Lal came upstairs and into our room. He greeted us but kept standing although Uttam Chand offered him a seat. After a while he turned back and went downstairs.

During our stay in Kabul and during the journey to Kabul Netaji generally could not get the kind of food he was used to. On occasions he complained of heaviness and pain in the stomach. Because of the circumstances we could not go to a physician for treatment. Netaji was happy to have shifted to this house where he could get the necessary treatment also.

The morning after we shifted to this house, we noticed that Roshan Lal's family had vacated their flat. We came to know that they had shifted suddenly to the house of one of their friends Radha Kishan. It was now the 9th of February. Netaji asked Uttam Chand to try and find out somehow if there was some special motive behind this move. Uttam Chand sensed danger to himself and also for us. This sudden move on the part of Roshan Lal scared Uttam Chand so much that he

<sup>1</sup> Sandli is a sort of a small wooden stand under which there is an oven which keeps the huge quilts in the room warm.



rushed out, took a close friend of his Haji Abdul Sobahan<sup>1</sup> into confidence and told him the whole story.

On the 9th February when Uttam Chand came home for lunch at about 2-00 p.m. he had Haji Abdul Sobahan with him. He introduced Haji Saheb to Netaji and myself. He took both of us in warm embrace. He had tears of affection and patriotic fervour in his eyes and said that he was very fortunate to have met Netaji under such circumstances. He said that this step taken by Netaji would bring the day of Indian independence nearer and that it was a step which had no precedence in the history of Indian independence movement. After an exchange of greetings tea was served. We discussed the Roshan Lal episode. Both Uttam Chand and Haji Saheb were very apprehensive about this development. Netaji kept quiet for a considerable time during the discussion ; then he asked my opinion about this affair. I told Netaji that in all probability Roshan Lal deserted this house only out of fear. If he wanted to hand us over and harm us something would have certainly happened by that time. I added that Roshan Lal was after all an Indian and every Indian had a passion for independence and had the highest regard for Netaji. There was no doubt that he recognised Netaji. But nobody in his senses would tarnish his own name by betraying a person like Netaji and the cause of Indian nation for nothing. I was very firm in my opinion that there was nothing to fear. On the other hand addressing Uttam Chand, I said that we did not want to be selfish and if they were still apprehensive of any danger to us all, we would be prepared to shift immediately to some other

<sup>1</sup> Haji Abdul Sobahan was originally an Indian citizen from the district of Mardan in N.W.F.P. He left India before the first world war and went to the U.S.A. where he came in contact with many Indian patriots including the renowned leader of Gadr Party Lala Hardayal at San Francisco. When the first world war broke out he together with some other comrades were sent to Afghanistan to work against the British in that country. This assignment he accepted as his patriotic duty and not on account of any monetary consideration. After the end of the war he went to Manchuria and from there to Germany where he married a German lady. Since he had close contacts with some members of the royal family, he came back to Afghanistan and settled there as an Afghan national. He had set up a woollen hosiery factory. He was arrested a number of times and remained in jail for considerable periods on all these occasions.



place. What we came to learn later confirmed my view. Roshan Lal told his friend Radha Kishan before shifting to his house that he had the feeling that the house was under some spell and under the influence of evil spirits and that he and his family just could not live there any more. He made up this story for the purpose of shifting to the house of his friend. We also learnt that he never talked about this affair to Uttam Chand or to anybody else.

Although Netaji was convinced of my point of view, we found that Uttam Chand and Haji Saheb continued to be apprehensive. We therefore decided to shift to a new place the following day. It was decided that Uttam Chand would go to his shop in the morning as usual and that I would go out and arrange for an alternative accommodation and shift to the new place on our own.

We had left our luggage back in our room in the *sarai* inside Lahori gate when we shifted from that place a day earlier. It was not correct to keep the luggage there and the room locked for too long as it could give cause for suspicion. We decided to fetch the luggage immediately. I took Amarnath, a Kabuli Hindu boy serving Uttam Chand to the *sarai* in the darkness of the evening. I made over all the luggage to him and he carried them to Uttam Chand's residence. I left the room unlocked and settled our account with the keeper. I returned to Uttam Chand's place through a circuitous route. We had a good night's rest at Uttam Chand's place.

## XV

On the 10th morning, Uttam Chand left for his shop at the usual time and in the usual manner after arranging for medicines for Netaji. I left the house to look for a new place. We did not want to go to the *sarai* in the fruit market where I had already booked a room and paid two days' rent. As we never shifted there on the appointed day and our going there now might cause suspicion. By now I was well acquainted with the roads and *sarais* of the city. I selected a *sarai* run and frequented by Pathan truck-owners, truck-drivers and travellers belonging



to different Pathan tribes of Afghanistan. This *sarai* called Sarai Zazian (Zazi is the name of an Afghan tribe) was situated in the *chawk* of Bazar Labe-Darya. This was also a two storeyed building. And it was a better *sarai* than the one inside the Lahori Gate. I rented a room on the first floor, arranged for two cots, and for charcoal for heating the room. In the afternoon Netaji and I shifted to the *sarai* with our luggage.

The next day, the 11th February, we were to meet Herr Thomas in his office for any message from Berlin. Since Netaji was not keeping well I wanted to be close to him. This was also necessary in view of our previous experience of the visits of the Afghan spy in our Lahori gate *sarai*. We therefore, chose Uttam Chand to act as a courier between us and Herr Thomas. He came back from the Siemens office to say that no message had yet been received from Berlin. By now we had lost hope of any help from this source. After some serious discussion with Netaji, we decided that we should make our own independent arrangements. Netaji asked me to discuss the matter with Uttam Chand and Haji Saheb to see if they had any contacts that could be of some help to us in our journey across the border to the Soviet Union.

On the 12th February, I took up this question of arrangements for crossing over the Russian border on our own with Uttam Chand and Haji Saheb. To be able to successfully cross the border into the Soviet Union and for further journey, it was essential that we had contact with people in the border area who were reliable, knew the various routes and could render effective help. Uttam Chand mentioned one Yakub who was at that time residing in Kabul. Originally he belonged to Peshawar city. About 20 years ago he had escaped after committing a murder and settled in Kabul. Now he was an Afghan citizen and had married into a family belonging to a village in the district of Khanabad, an industrial city in Afghanistan on the border with the Soviet Union. His brother-in-law lived on the border and indulged in dacoities and smuggling across the border. He knew the area very well. Uttam Chand had good relations with Yakub and he thought that these people



would be of great help to us in our mission. River Amu (Oxys) flows along the border between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan. Uttam Chand felt that it should be possible to cross the river with their help and also continue further into Soviet territory.

I reported the result of my talks to Netaji. Although he generally approved of the proposal, he advised us to move with great caution lest Yakub became a source of trouble for us. We decided that Uttam Chand should talk to Yakub and tell him that he had received a message from a friend in India who wanted to cross the border and go to the Soviet Union. If Yakub was in a position to render the necessary help Uttam Chand would inform his friend in India. The friend would come over after a definite assurance of help was forth-coming. Uttam Chand was not to mention anything about Netaji or our presence in Kabul. I conveyed this to Uttam Chand who contacted Yakub. Yakub told him about his brother-in-law and assured him of all help in such a mission. He told him further that it would be no problem for his brother-in-law who had to cross the border frequently in connection with his trade.

We wanted to explore several possibilities and different proposals because no response from our German contacts was forthcoming. We had, however, not lost complete hope because at one of my meetings with Herr Thomas he had conveyed to me a message from his government that all the three Axis powers, Germany, Italy and Japan had made a joint request to the Soviet Union for a transit visa for Netaji for travelling through that country. They had conveyed to us that they considered this issue as important as Lenin's crossing over to Russia with the help of the German Government during the first world war and on the eve of the Russian Revolution. Moreover, Netaji's stomach trouble took a turn for the worse at this time. He developed serious dysentery and suffered much from abdominal pain. He was not in a position to undertake further journey till he had recovered from his illness.

I met Uttam Chand at his shop, apprised him of Netaji's illness and asked him to narrate his condition to the physician



and get the necessary medicines. I also asked him to arrange for proper food for Netaji. Uttam Chand arranged for the medicines after consultation with the doctor and also arranged for '*Khichri*' and curds for Netaji from his house every day till Netaji recovered. I used to collect Netaji's food from the shop. This was brought there along with Uttam Chand's lunch in the normal way.

Our stay in Kabul was being prolonged. Thus we had the time to explore and try different sources for going ahead with our mission. Once I took Uttam Chand with me to the residence of Haji Saheb and opened a discussion. I told them they were both patriots and revolutionaries of long standing, had lived in Kabul for years and therefore it should not be too much to expect that they may have contacts who would in turn help us in establishing a link with the Soviet Embassy. I pleaded with them to give the matter serious consideration and give us some concrete help in achieving our objective. Haji Saheb said that he had no such contacts and could not think of any way out of the situation, except that some members of the staff of the Russian Embassy in Kabul sometimes came to his factory to purchase woollen garments and he could possibly talk to them or pass on a message to them for the Russian Ambassador. When I reported this to Netaji he approved of the proposal and wrote out a letter addressed to the Russian Ambassador. Haji Saheb delivered this letter to two ladies who came to his factory and requested them to pass it on to the Russian Ambassador. These ladies never came to the factory again nor did we ever hear from the Ambassador throughout our stay in Kabul. I had the feeling that these were the same ladies we had contacted in Bazar Labedarya during our early days in Kabul.

On the 13th February we only marked time for improvement of Netaji's physical condition and awaited further developments. Netaji did show some improvement in his health.

On the 14th we were again to contact Herr Thomas. I asked Uttam Chand to see him. He was to tell him that our failure to get a positive reply from them for so long exposed



us to the risk of being apprehended by the Afghan police. Netaji was now showing improvement in his health and in case Herr Thomas was not able to obtain any encouraging response from Berlin soon, we might have to continue our journey onward to the Soviet Union in the same manner as we did from India. Further, Uttam Chand was to insist that Herr Thomas passed on our feelings to the Minister also. On his return Uttam Chand informed us that no message had yet been received by the Minister although Herr Thomas assured him that they were trying very hard to get a reply as early as possible. Delay in response from the Soviet Union was holding up escort arrangements for Netaji.

On the 15th I had a talk with Netaji about Roshan Lal. I was of the opinion that we were scared of him unnecessarily. If that man wanted to report us, he would have done so by now. After close observation we were convinced that there was no watch over the house or shop of Uttam Chand. Absolutely no indication was available that Roshan Lal meant to report us or do any harm to us. So, all our doubts and fears were unfounded. Netaji was not well and he could not be taken care of properly in the *sarai*. On the other hand in the residence of a friend like Uttam Chand he could be provided with proper food, medicines and nursing. Moreover, I had to remain with Netaji in the *sarai* and could not move about to explore new avenues of breaking out of Kabul. I was firmly of the opinion now that Netaji should shift back to the residence of Uttam Chand. I told Netaji that if he approved, I would talk to Uttam Chand and see if they agreed to our proposal. Netaji agreed saying that now that he was recovering from his illness and was feeling weak he should seek proper care and rest in the house of Uttam Chand. This was for the purpose of the impending journey to the Soviet Union.

From the *sarai* I went straight to Uttam Chand's shop and conveyed our feelings to him and our very emphatic opinion that there was absolutely no risk in keeping Netaji in his house. Netaji badly needed the facilities of a private house. As a matter of fact we were more or less certain that there was no need



to shift him to the *sarai* in the first place. But at the particular time we did not want it to appear that we were being selfish and that in the interest of our own safety we were exposing Uttam Chand and his family to danger. I told Uttam Chand further that even if Netaji was arrested in the *sarai* and not in his house, he could not help being implicated. I boosted his moral by saying that we were both Pathans from the same area and after all Pathans were brave and hospitable people. We had been comrades-in-arms in the struggle for Indian independence and had faced British zulum. It would therefore be a matter of shame for us both if a personality of the stature of Netaji continued to rot in the poor living conditions of a *sarai* in the present state of his health and that he was denied the ordinary comforts of a private house and proper food on account of imaginary fears.

Uttam Chand agreed instantly and said that he was also of the opinion that there was no danger now from Roshan Lal and that Netaji might shift to his residence the same day. He suggested that we discussed the matter with Haji Saheb. We went to his residence which was just behind his shop. Actually, the back door of the shop opened into the yard where Haji Saheb's residence was located. It was a good modern building housing the factory also. We met Haji Saheb there. He also agreed that there was no risk in taking Netaji back to Uttam Chand's residence, adding that perhaps their fears even at the time when Roshan Lal moved out of his house were not well-founded. It was finally decided that we would shift in the evening. I told Uttam Chand that I would pack up and settle our account on returning to the *sarai* and that he should send Amarnath with a coolie for carrying the luggage back to the residence. Netaji and I left the *sarai* and took a tonga at about 5-00 p.m. on the 15th February and took a round of the bazar in the tonga upto Mazang and left the tonga there. After some time we hired another tonga and came upto Pule-Khishti. From there we walked to Uttam Chand's house. It was nearly 6-00 p.m. when we reached there. By then Amarnath had brought back the luggage to the house.



## XVI

In the morning of the 16th February, Uttam Chand arranged a meeting between me and Yakub. I wanted to assess the man, discuss matters with him, and find out what his resources were and how far, if at all, he could help us in our mission. It was planned that Uttam Chand would first contact him and ask him to come to his shop about noon where I would be introduced to him as a friend. The person who wanted to go to the Soviet Union was to be referred to as a colleague of mine who would come over on receiving intimation that he could be taken across the borders. I went to Uttam Chand shop at the appointed hour. As I entered I noticed a man in Peshawari dress sitting with Uttam Chand. Uttam Chand got up immediately and gestured to me in a meaningful manner. I took the hint and asked Uttam Chand for a particular brand of teapot in the way of a customer. He answered that he did not have it and I left the shop. I was taking a stroll in the bazar when Uttam Chand came up to me. He told me that the man was his close friend Jiwan Lal who was a commission agent in resins and who used to come to Kabul from Peshawar every year in connection with his business. He asked me to wait across the river opposite his shop. He would come back to me with Yakub as soon as he arrived. I was pacing up and down the road along the river when I noticed Uttam Chand walking towards the bridge with another person. I also approached the bridge. Uttam Chand introduced Yakub to me and left after a short while telling him that I was a good and old friend and he should render me all possible help.

I explained to Yakub that my friend who was still in India wanted to proceed to the Soviet Union and that I knew that it was not possible to do so without the help of a friend who knew the area and the border. I also told him that he should commit himself only if he was sure of himself and the arrangements. He said that he had no doubt in his mind that he was in a position to help as his brother-in-law who lived on the border was very well acquainted with that area. I had a long talk with him. I fixed up another appointment with him for



the next day and returned to Uttam Chand's house in the evening. We told Netaji about our experiences of the day including the encounter with Jiwanlal. Uttam Chand said that Jiwanlal was a close friend of his, came to his shop very frequently and that there was no way of keeping him out of the picture. He added that Jiwanlal was a good and reliable person and that there would be no harm in taking him into confidence. I was of the opinion that that should be avoided as far as possible. I need not visit the shop, Netaji was confined to his house and need not go personally to Herr Thomas. As Jiwanlal came to see him in the shop and not in the house and had his own place to stay there was no need to confide in him. Later, when and if it became absolutely essential, we might reconsider the matter. This question was therefore dropped for the time being.

On the 17th February I was to keep my appointment with Yakub. I met him in the bazar at the appointed place and went with him for lunch in a restaurant. I repeated to him that he should not undertake this responsibility if he had even the slightest doubt of not being able to carry it out. He reassured me. It was decided that we would leave in a few days. I also offered him monetary help to provide for rations etc. for his family before we left. He did not want any money but I nonetheless gave him 300 Afghanis. I suggested to him that since he had his in-laws there he might take his family along with us. He said that he would talk that over with his wife. He showed me his house so that I could contact him even at odd hours. I also offered him money for any presents he might like to take for his brother-in-law. I returned to Uttam Chand's house in the darkness of the evening.

On the 18th February, I saw Herr Thomas with a letter from Netaji addressed to the German Ambassador. In this letter Netaji revealed his plan of proceeding further on his journey across the border on his own. He said that as we had not got a satisfactory reply from the German Government and as it was not safe to continue our stay in Kabul much longer, we had been compelled to take this step. Netaji asked him in



this letter if he could give us any help in connection with this journey to the border. Netaji also enquired if they could give us some monetary help for unforeseen expenditure in this long and arduous trek. I delivered this letter to Herr Thomas and explained to him the difficult conditions we were living in and the reasons which had forced us to the decision of going ahead independently. Herr Thomas promised to deliver the letter to the Minister and asked me to come back on the 22nd February for a reply.

I kept in touch with Yakub and confirmed our arrangements with him. We had planned to leave by bus on the 23rd morning. We purchased three tickets for Khanabad on the 22nd for the two of us and Yakub. He had decided not to take his family with us lest they became a problem for us during the journey.

On the 22nd morning I met Yakub again and gave him some more money so that he could purchase necessary provisions for his family for the month that he would be away. I also purchased a 'lungi' (turban) and some other presents for Yakub's brother-in-law. We had a road map with us all along our journey from India. It was very useful to us as a guide on our way to Kabul. This map also showed all the physical details and the roads and included photographs of Afghanistan right upto the Russian border. We studied it thoroughly and planned our journey. Uttam Chand had also purchased a guide book of Afghanistan written by a professor of Habibya College, Kabul. This book also contained a useful road map. The same day I went to Herr Thomas at about noon for the reply from the German Minister to Netaji's letter but he was away. I went to him again about 3-00 p.m. when he told me that they had had a talk about us with the Italian Minister and that I should see him. I told him I did not know the way to his house. Moreover it might not be possible for me to gain access to him. Herr Thomas assured me that I would get an interview with him if I went to the Italian Legation. When he still found me somewhat hesitant and reluctant, he told me again that I would surely get a satisfactory reply from the



Italian Minister. Because of our past experience with embassies and legations, I remained sceptical, but on Herr Thomas's persuasion I decided to go to the Italian Legation.

## XVII

I remembered having seen, during my rounds of the city with Netaji, a small sign-board of the Italian Legation in a blind alley in New Kabul. That was the back door of the legation. I entered through that door and I came face to face with a number of Afghan employees of the legation. They asked me who I was. I said that I was a cook sent by Herr Thomas and wanted an interview with the Minister. One of the servants thereupon took me to the Minister's office. He was then engaged in some discussions with one of his Afghan employees. He noticed me and asked me who I was. I told him that I had been sent there by Herr Thomas. I thought he would understand and ask the other man to leave. But I felt like losing ground under my feet when he burst out "What for?" I however, composed myself and said confidently and forcefully, "I don't know, I had just been asked to see you". My emphatic and forceful reply seemed to have given him the feeling that I was probably more than an ordinary Afghan although I was dressed like one. He immediately picked up the phone and talked to Herr Thomas. Thereafter he asked his Afghan assistants to leave. The servant who came with me also left.

The Minister closed the door, asked me to be seated and introduced himself as Pietro Quaroni, Minister of the Legation of Italy. I introduced myself as "Rahmat Khan" and told him that I had escorted Subhas Chandra Bose to Kabul and that we had been here since the 27th January. I related to him how we had been trying through the German Legation for safe conduct for Bose across the border but we had not met with any success although they had been promising us speedy arrangements in this regard. We felt that our prolonged stay in that city was dangerous and therefore we had decided to start moving towards to Soviet Union on our own. I also told



him that Suhhas Chandra Bose had sent a message in these terms to the German Minister asking him if they would be in a position to help us in our plan. We had not yet received any reply to that communication.

The Italian Minister replied that the German Minister had talked to him about the matter and had informed him about our plan. He said that the step contemplated by us was full of risks. The journey through Afghanistan as well as through Russian territory would be hazardous. He said that the three Axis governments had made a joint request to the Soviet Government to issue a transit visa to Subhas Chandra Bose. And as they had friendly relations with that country they expected a favourable reply very soon. I told him that we were given this information some days ago but nothing seemed to have come out of it. Besides, there was no certainty that a visa would be available in this way. He again stressed on their good relations with the Soviet Union which made them hopeful. He added that they were expecting their diplomatic couriers very shortly and they might make arrangements for the safe conduct of Netaji with their help. They were also considering the possibility of making arrangements through Iran and Syria and that they had already contacted their diplomatic missions in those countries in this connection. It should be easy to escort Netaji to Rome or Berlin through these countries.

I argued with the Minister that materialisation of these plans might take considerable time while we could not prolong our stay in Kabul any further because we were exposed to the risk of being apprehended. We did not feel safe in Kabul at all. I explained to him briefly our predicament, the problems that we were facing and the reasons for our being impatient. The only course open to us was to undertake further journey on our own. I requested him to consider the possibility of helping us in our journey in the light of Netaji's letter to the German Minister. I laid stress on the journey we proposed to undertake on our own. Because for one thing we had already made arrangements which seemed quite satisfactory. Secondly I was not sure that any of the proposals of the Italian Minister



could take practical shape within a reasonable time. We discussed the various issues for a rather long time and I continued to insist on the acceptance of our plan to proceed on our own. Finally he asked me to arrange a meeting between him and Subhas Chandra Bose. I told him that I had come to him direct from Herr Thomas's office without Mr. Bose's knowledge. I therefore was not sure that he would be able to come but I would convey his request to him. I told the Minister that we had already purchased our tickets and we were planning to leave for the border the next morning.

The Minister repeated his desire to have a talk with Netaji and wanted me to make sure and arrange the meeting. It was decided that if Mr. Bose wanted to come it would be some time between 7 and 8 p.m. the same evening i.e. 22nd February. The Minister introduced me to his Secretary Anzilotti, who would wait at the front door during that hour. We would knock and Mr. Anzilotti would come forward to receive us without giving a chance to the gateman to ask questions.

I reached Uttam Chand's house by about 6-00 p.m. when it was already dark. Uttam Chand had already come back from his shop. He had also told Netaji that Jiwan Lal was becoming more and more suspicious and that it would be advisable to take him into confidence before he did any harm to us through ignorance. Netaji had agreed to this suggestion and Jiwan Lal was to come and meet Netaji that evening.

I narrated to Netaji in detail my experiences of the day, all that had passed between Herr Thomas and the Italian Minister on the one hand and myself on the other. Finally I told him about the appointment between him and the Minister, adding that I had made it clear to the Minister that the appointment was not binding on us. At first, Netaji was a little perturbed and told me that I should not have gone to the Italian Legation particularly when we had already made pucca plans for making a move on our own. I explained to him that Herr Thomas had asked me particularly to see the Italian Minister for a reply to Netaji's letter to the German Minister. He thought over the issue for a while and thereafter said that we



would go and keep the appointment. He touched up his appearance a little, clipped his beard and moustache and got dressed up in one of Uttam Chand's European suits, a Karakuli cap and put on his shoes. Both of us left for the Italian Legation on foot at about 6-30 p.m. As planned earlier, we knocked at the front door of the Legation which was opened by an Afghan. Before the Afghan guard could ask any questions Mr. Anzilotti who was expecting us took us in and asked the Afghan to leave. We went to the Minister's room where I introduced Netaji to the Italian Minister. The Minister told Netaji that he was very glad over his successful escape from India to Kabul and congratulated him on this achievement. Netaji said in reply that his escape from India to Kabul did not in any way fulfil the purpose of his mission. A great deal remained to be achieved for which we needed the help of every one who fought our enslavers. Then we started an exchange of views on the political situation in India and the bearing of war on it. The possibility of building up a strong resistance movement in India and in the tribal areas against the British also came up for discussion. When I realised that we were getting lost in political discussions and forgetting about the real and immediate issue I raised the question of arranging Netaji's safe conduct out of Kabul. I also said that we must take a decision immediately whether we were going back or staying the night at the legation because it was dangerous to move about in Kabul late at night.

The Minister suggested that we remained at the legation for the night as there were so many things to discuss. He wanted an exhaustive discussion on world affairs. I said that it would not be correct for both of us to stay there overnight. Jiwan Lal was to come to meet Netaji that night and the absence of both of us might lead him to draw undesirable and harmful conclusions. It was decided therefore that I would return to Uttam Chand's house. The Minister thereupon asked his secretary Mr. Anzilotti to drop me by car wherever I wanted. I suggested that to avoid any suspicion both Netaji and I should walk out of the legation, the car should pick us



up from the road at an appointed place, drop me and bring Netaji back. This was agreed upon. We also fixed up as to where and at what time Netaji would be returned to us the next day. The place was Darul Aman and the time 2.00 p.m. on the 23rd February. This place was nearly four miles from New Kabul. We had purchased bus tickets and had planned to go to Khanabad by bus the next morning. When I asked Netaji what we were to do about the plan of going forward on our own by bus, he did not say anything. It was obvious that we had to put it off at least temporarily.

### XVIII

When I reached Uttam Chand's house I found both Uttam Chand and Jiwan Lal there. Jiwan Lal was very astonished to see me. He said that he had taken me for a bad character when he saw me on various occasions particularly in Yakub's company. I told them that Netaji would be back the next day when Jiwan Lal could meet him. I had the feeling that Uttam Chand insisted on introducing Jiwan Lal because he must have himself told him in a moment of ecstasy that he was giving shelter to a person of Netaji's stature and that he would introduce Jiwan Lal to him. I did not see any reason why it was absolutely essential to do so. Jiwan Lal who had come with sweets and fruit for Netaji was very disappointed that he would not be meeting Netaji that evening.

On the 23rd February I went to Yakub's house earlier than arranged and told him that we had to put off our journey for the time being and had to return the tickets because the gentleman concerned had failed to arrive on account of some trouble at his end. I told him that he could use whatever money he could get for the bus tickets. I had my midday meal in a restaurant and trekked the four miles to Darul Aman<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Darul-Aman means place of Aman. It was constructed during the reign of King Aman-Ullah Khan of Afghanistan. It was a huge beautiful building surrounded by a beautiful and extensive garden. It was very well maintained and could claim to be a grand architectural achievement of the builders of that time. The work of the horticulturists of Afghanistan in the development of this and the country in general was also of very high order. The drive leading to the building was magnificent with tall poplar trees on both sides.



(now called Darul Fanoon) to meet Netaji at the appointed time.

Netaji arrived there a few minutes earlier than the appointed time. He was driven by a Second Secretary of the Italian Legation Mr. Creshini. He took photographs of Netaji in the same suit he had borrowed from Uttam Chand. Mr. Creshini who was a trusted man of his Government and belonged to Mussolini's political party was somewhat hard of hearing. He had played an active role in the struggle which brought Mussolini to power in Italy. He told Netaji about his past political work and the latter conveyed it to me. After Mr. Creshini left, we walked back to Kabul. By the time we reached Uttam Chand's house it was already dark. Uttam Chand and Jiwan Lal also came in shortly after we reached the house. Jiwan Lal who was introduced to Netaji stayed for dinner. After he had left, Netaji narrated the details of his talk at the legation. In the course of their discussions, the Minister made the same proposals that he had made to me on the 22nd February. The proposals were : i) Travel through Soviet Union on Russian transit Visa ; (ii) The diplomatic courier plan. The Minister told Netaji that two of their diplomatic couriers were expected any day. One of them would stay back and his diplomatic passport with the necessary visa would be utilized by Netaji. The photograph on the passport would of course have to be replaced with the one of Netaji. (iii) Travel through Iran and Syria. The Minister informed him that they were working on all the three plans and that Netaji would be escorted according to any of these plans which matured earlier. The Minister had convinced Netaji that it would not be correct to proceed on our own. In the first place, there were a number of hurdles in crossing the Russian border and even after crossing it successfully there were very great risks on the other side. Russian guards who were ordinary people might not understand us and taking us to be outlaws, dacoits or smugglers might even cause us bodily harm. Netaji finally dropped the idea of going ahead on our own although we continued to keep contact with Yakub. The latter was told that for some reason our man



could not come now although he might do so some time later.

From now onwards we did not need to contact Herr Thomass or the German Legation. Our direct contact with the Italian Legation was fully established. We did not need to have prior appointment for visiting the legation. The Italians could also contact us at Uttam Chand's shop pretending to be customers. When we had to convey any message I would go to Creshini's residence in New Kabul. From the other side the Minister's wife Mrs. Quaroni would come to Uttam Chand's shop if there was any message for us. Even if there was no message to be conveyed from either side, there was contact between us every three or four days as a matter of routine to keep all concerned posted with the latest developments. Now, there was nothing for us to do except to await the final message from them that arrangements had been completed and that Netaji should be ready for the journey.

Now that our activities slackened, we started going out on long walks. Netaji had dispensed with his old Pathan dress since the evening he went to the Italian Legation. He kept his beard well trimmed in the modern Afghan style and wore European dress and Karakuli cap. Netaji and I now visited different places in the city. We were now reasonably confident that our mission would meet with success even though it might take some time. In order to do something fruitful in our leisure time we asked Haji Saheb to introduce us to some anti-British people with a revolutionary background. He readily agreed. Amongst others there was a group from Bannu (NWFP-India) who had migrated to Kabul because of British terror. One of them was Sher Afzal Khan who was introduced to Netaji. He was later arrested by Afghan police while he was on his way along with his colleagues for anti-British work in the tribal areas. Two of his brothers who were in the Afghan army were also arrested. This group from Bannu had many relations back home who were actively involved in the struggle for independence. One of them was Yakub Khan who was a commandant



in the Red Shirt Movement and was in the Haripur jail with us in 1931.

During this period of waiting Netaji used to go out for walks in the suit and shoes borrowed from Uttam Chand. These shoes were too tight for him and pinched him. He therefore decided to get new shoes for himself. One day we went to a shoe store and he himself asked for a pair. This was an unfortunate slip on our part, although we were aware by this time that a good number of Indians had settled down in Kabul. It so happened that the shop-keeper was an Indian and he guessed from Netaji's way of talking that we were from India also. He got interested and started asking questions. Netaji told him that he was from Eastern United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh) in India and had taken up a job as a professor in the Habibya College at Kabul. The shop keeper said in reply that he knew all the Indian professors but had never seen him. Netaji sought to explain by saying that because of the language problem he did not move about much. Moreover he had been here only a short time. The shop keeper was evidently more interested in getting acquainted with him than in selling shoes and invited Netaji to tea. We, however, managed to put him off by saying that we were in a hurry and might meet some other time. We got the shoes and left the shop in haste.

About a week before Netaji's departure from Kabul Mrs. Quaroni came with a message to Uttam Chand's shop. The message referred to arrangements (i) for taking photographs of Netaji for his passport and (ii) for his clothing for the journey.

For the photographs we were asked to be at Darul-Aman at about 1-00 p.m. the following day. Creshini drove to that place at the fixed time and took three snaps of Netaji in different poses. We drove back with Creshini in his car. We had already asked Uttam Chand to arrange with Haji Saheb for Netaji's clothing. On our return, Netaji and I went to the Haji Saheb's residence. The latter sent a man to fetch a few suit lengths and shirtings from cloth stores, out of which Netaji made a selection. Towels, night suits, toilet articles and other personal effects were also obtained and packed in a suitcase



for Netaji. Suit lengths were delivered to a tailor in the employ of Haji Saheb who promised that he would complete the tailoring in three to four days. Everything was delivered on schedule except for the vest, which was sent to Netaji later on by Haji's wife through her sister in Berlin by parcel via Turkey.

It will be recalled that on the 1st of February, before crashing into the German Legation Netaji had passed on to me an article and two letters that I was to deliver to Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose. Under his instructions and on his return from the Legation, these documents were destroyed. Netaji had written them in a hurry. Since that time and during the rather long period of waiting for arrangements to mature, Netaji took his time and wrote out a lengthy thesis 'Forward Bloc : its justification', and an article "A Message to My Countrymen". The former was in pencil and the latter in ink. He took a long time and great pains in writing, amending correcting and going over the thesis and the article again and again. He also wrote out two letters one addressed to Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose in Bengali and the second in English to Sardar Sardul Singh Caveeshar, then acting President of the Forward Bloc. During this time he gave considerable thought to the National Flag of Independent India which would also be the flag to be adopted during the final struggle for independence. He made a number of sketches and designs and ultimately concluded that plain tricolour would be the most suitable design.

Netaji delivered these articles and letters to me on the 16th March to be delivered at Calcutta with the same instructions as given to me earlier. This time he gave me additional instructions. He told me that Sardul Singh Caveeshar had assured him at the time of his escape from India that he would put his heart and soul in any joint struggle at the appropriate time. Netaji wanted me also to verbally convey to Caveeshar his views and instructions regarding the work of the Forward Bloc and the struggle that was yet to be waged. Netaji told me that after his brother Sarat Chandra Bose and his nephew Sisir Bose, his most trusted men were Satya Ranjan Baksi, Leela Roy and Anil Roy. They were all available in Calcutta



and that I should make it a point to see them on my return to India.

On the 14th March, we received an invitation from Mr. and Mrs. Haji for lunch and tea at their residence for the following day. After breakfast on the 15th, we left Uttam Chand's house, roamed about the suburbs of Kabul and reached Haji's residence by lunch time. We spent the afternoon there. As we were having tea, Uttam Chand arrived there at about 4 p.m. with the final message that we have been waiting for so eagerly for the past many weeks. The message from the Italian Legation received at Uttam Chand's shop said that Netaji's suitcase should be at the shop from where it would be picked up on the 16th by the Legation personnel at 2 p.m. The message further said that we were to go to Creshini's residence in the evening of the 17th. Netaji's departure from Kabul was fixed for the morning of the 18th of March.

On the 16th March, Netaji's suitcase was taken to the shop. Uttam Chand purchased a good felt hat for Netaji the same day. Netaji and I remained outdoors throughout the day going round the different areas and bazars of the city.

According to the final arrangements, the 17th of March was to be our last day in Kabul. Our hostess prepared a special breakfast for us on that day. Netaji had a hearty breakfast, played and joked with the children and thanked the hostess for the wonderful treatment given to us during our stay in their house. We took leave of her and the children with whom we had developed most affectionate relations during our stay.

We spent part of the day sight-seeing and then went to Haji's place. Netaji took leave of them. Sher Afzal Khan was also there. We went to Creshini's place at about 7 p.m. along with Uttam Chand who stayed to dinner. Netaji and I stayed overnight in the guest room and had a long talk about our future work. Netaji told Creshini and another Italian gentleman who was there that I would be the link between India and Kabul and that they should provide the communications link between him and Kabul. He further informed them that



I had very useful contacts in the tribal territories and that my work would be principally in the tribal areas.

It was the morning of the 18th March, 1942, a big car arrived at Creshini's residence when it was still dark. In this car were Dr. Wenger from Germany, another gentleman from the German legation, an Italian courier and a European driver. Netaji gave me a vigorous handshake and embraced me very affectionately. He got into the car and they drove off when it was still dark. He became so sentimental that he could not say a word to me while parting. After seeing Netaji off I took leave of Creshini and came back to Uttam Chand's house and informed him of Netaji's departure. I had a good bath after several days and felt very light having seen through the success of this difficult mission.

Netaji was given the name of Orlando Mazzotta, that of the Italian courier whose passport he was using. He travelled through Soviet Union on a Russian transit visa.<sup>1</sup>

## XIX

I must say that despite our initial fears regarding and difficulties with Jiwanlal (which were natural under the circumstances) once he knew what it was all about he did his best to help in whatever way he could.

Uttam Chand's wife Ramo Devi played a great and noble role in affording us protection in our difficult days during our stay in Kabul. She displayed wonderful tact and presence of mind in handling the situation. All credit goes to her for the fact that during our stay for such a long period the neighbours or visitors did not get suspicious about us. She spared no pains to make Netaji's stay in her house as comfortable as possible. She always provided proper food for Netaji and took great care particularly during the days Netaji was unwell. She managed the children very well and we never had any reason to suspect that the children were talking. Under her control even the servants proved to be useful and reliable. I think she gave very valuable support to her husband in this difficult task of

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 1 (c) and (d).



sheltering a personality so well known and at the same time sought after by the police. The part played by Uttam Chand himself was also very commendable. An ordinary man would hesitate and falter. But once he was convinced that Netaji needed his help and shelter, they were forthcoming in an abundant measure. But for his co-operation and help we would have been in serious trouble.

I was now about to leave Kabul after successfully dodging the police there for nearly 52 days. This is a very long period of time for Kabul which is a small city with very limited scope of movement. It would not have been difficult for the British police to locate and apprehend us in that city if they had any clue to our movements. Our escort arrangements for Netaji to Kabul were so reliable and perfect that not a word leaked out. And the strong British C. I. D. could not get any scent of our movements and activities. In fact, they were tracking Sadhus down in South India, viz., Pondicherry on the basis of rumours that Netaji had become a *Sadhu*. Police also chased ships and aeroplanes to Japan, Burma and even China on the basis of rumours. As to myself the police never suspected till the time of my return to India that I had escorted Netaji to Kabul. Some of the rumours were of course given out by our own contacts, who knew about Netaji's escape, to put the police on the wrong track.

On the 19th March, I left Kabul in the morning for Jallalabad after bidding farewell and expressing my thanks and gratitude to Uttam Chand and his family. I took a tonga upto Budkhak where I looked out for a truck to take me as a passenger. At about 5.00 p.m. a truck driver agreed to take me as a passenger upto Jallalabad. I reached there early in the morning at about 7.00 a.m. on the 20th March. After breakfast I walked down to Lalma to meet Haji Mohammad Amin. I found him at his residence. He said that we had taken too long in this particular mission. I explained to him that as we had no previous contacts of any kind we had to encounter numerous obstacles and overcome them. When I told him that my companion was Netaji Subhas Bose he was overwhelmed.



He commented jokingly that I was a mischievous person in that I had not disclosed this to him during our previous visit. We talked about our future course of action. I told him that the time had come when we should regroup our forces and get set for the final assault on the British for the independence of our country. I appealed him to start organising his forces in any way he considered proper for a last-ditch struggle. He agreed that we should get going with our work and promised that he would use all his influence amongst the Shinwari tribe and Mohammad tribe to organise anti-British forces. He added that if need be he would himself shift to these tribal areas to build up a strong movement. I fixed up means of communication between him and myself and between Haji Saheb and Sanobar Hussain who was in those days residing in Bajaur tribal area in the village of Bandagai. Before leaving I asked him to arrange a reliable guide for me who could help me in crossing the river Kabul via Char Deh to village Arkhi. The route I had selected for myself was through Arkhi, Kudakhel, Gandab Valley, Shabkadar and thence to Peshawar. It was not possible for me to go by bus by the direct route as I had no passport with me. Moreover, people of Peshawar area who frequently travelled by buses on this route knew me and they might spot me. The police was also looking for me those days. I also asked him to arrange for company for me beyond Arkhi. He deputed an Afghan who was a reliable person and who knew the area very well.

Leaving Lalman on the 21st morning, we reached Arkhi in the evening on foot and stayed the night in a mosque. In the morning we were told that a couple of donkeywallas (small traders) were going to Shabkadar. My guide advised me that I should accompany them upto Gandab. On the way we stayed one night at Kudakhel with Mohammad. Early next morning, viz., the 23rd March, we resumed our journey and reached Gandab by 8.00 a.m. the same day after a trek of nearly 5 hours. The traders continued their journey to Shabkadar while I took a bus from Gandab to Shabkadar. I reached this town just before noon. Shabkadar was in Indian



territory in the district of Peshawar. Many knew me in this town. Several of them were in jail with me during the Independence movement. It was therefore, necessary that I left Shabkadar as early as possible. I could not afford to wait for a bus for the onward journey to Peshawar. I did not want to reach Peshawar before dark. Moreover, I was afraid somebody might recognise me in the bus. I therefore, got on a tonga and reached the outskirts of Peshawar at about 3.00 p.m. on the 23rd March. I left the tonga near Balasar. I was very anxious for some shelter till it was dark. I felt very unsafe and uneasy and quietly slipped into Bazar Andar Shahar and went to the shop of one Arjan Dass, a tailor, who was related to me. I went inside the shop and slept in a corner. When I woke up Arjan Dass told me that a C. I. D. Sub-Inspector known as Kucha who was very notorious and expert in tracking down political workers had come and asked for me while I was asleep. He told me further that he had asked for me several times during the last few days as he knew I was related to him. I put up a very casual manner and said that whenever the police did not see me for a few days, they became uneasy for no particular reason and started asking about me of all my friends and relations. It was then evening and dark and I felt safer. From Peshawar I was to go to Lahore and onward to Calcutta to convey Netaji's message. It was therefore absolutely unsafe for me to be in Peshawar for a longer period as I was too well-known in this city. I was still in Afghan dress. I knew I should have changed into my usual dress immediately after entering Peshawar city but unfortunately I had no such clothes with me. While in Kabul I was wearing a beard. I started clipping it down during the return journey from Jallalabad. At Peshawar I got myself shaven clean.

For my onward journey to Lahore I needed proper clothing immediately. I went to Abad Khan's place in the darkness of the night of the 23rd March by a circuitous route. I found him at his place. We went to Peshawar cantonment where I arranged for ready-made European-type garments for myself and changed my disguise to modern European style.



From there we took a car and drove straight to Badrashi near Nowshera to meet Mian Akbar Shah. Akbar Shah was at his place when we reached there at about 9.00 p.m. While I waited outside, Akbar Shah came out and took me to a side room. We sent Abad Khan back. During the night I apprised Akbar Shah of all that happened since Netaji and I left Peshawar for Kabul on the 22nd January. I told him that it was risky for me to visit him frequently and since we must keep in contact, proper and safe arrangements for communication between us should be made. He promised that he would make necessary arrangements and inform me about them at Lahore.

The next day i.e. on the 24th March a nephew of Akbar Shah came with a tonga early in the morning. I went towards Akora khatak side on the main road in this tonga and got off at a small place where I left the tonga. From here I took a bus coming from Peshawar side for Campbellpore. From there I took a bus for Rawalpindi where I got on the train at night and reached Lahore in the morning of the 25th March. I dreaded the journey from Peshawar to Rawalpindi as people and the police of this area knew me. I had to take very special care to escape arrest.

## XX

I stayed in a hotel at Lahore. I saw Pandit Balbhadar in Krishna Nagar and told him that I wanted to see Gurcharan Singh Sainsra alias Hidayat Khan. This Balbhadar was an employee of Hindi Milap and a contact man between our comrades. Sainsra was an active member of the Communist party and one of the few very important comrades who were not in jail at that time. He was working underground on the literary front. Balbhadar told me that he would inform Sainsra about me and that I should come to a small park nearby in the morning of the following day. I returned to my hotel at dinner time. The next morning on the 26th March, I reached the park at 6.30 a.m. Sainsra was already there. He told me that it would be safer for me to stay with him where we could talk and discuss our work. We came back to the hotel,



settled my account and went to Sainsra's place. It was a big house owned by a vaid who was a party sympathiser. Part of that house was given on rent to the party which had its underground headquarters there at that time. There were a few other comrades staying there also in hiding from the police. They felt sorry to learn that we had to face so much of difficulty in Kabul and that we could not establish any link with the Russian Embassy. They were of the opinion that we should arrange to have permanent contacts so that in future our comrades may not have to face such a situation. I asked for a comrade to come with me to Calcutta where I had to deliver Netaji's message to Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose. They agreed and deputed one of their trusted men for this purpose.

I told Sainsra that I had to see Sardul Singh Caveeshar and deliver Netaji's letter and message to him. Sainsra and Caveeshar knew each other very well. The same evening the two of us went to his residence in Lahore. Caveeshar was then the Acting President of the Forward Bloc and probably Chairman of some insurance company. Sainsra introduced me to Caveeshar, told him that I had escorted Netaji to Kabul and that I had a message for him from Netaji. I passed on the letter to him and also conveyed to him verbally what Netaji had told me. I was, however, most disappointed to find that he took very little interest in what I had to say. As a matter of fact, I saw that he was scared and kept on peeping out of the window while we talked. After I had passed on Netaji's letter to him he went to another room. He came back after a while and told me that he had compared the handwriting in the letter with Netaji's handwriting on documents available with him and that he had found that the letter I delivered to him was a fake. I was convinced that he was scared and wanted to avoid involvement in any affair that would make him a suspect in the eyes of the police. When he repeated that the letter was a fake and hinted that we might leave, I told him that what he thought of the letter was not my concern ; so far as I was concerned it was a genuine letter. I requested him not to disclose to anybody that a letter from



Netaji was brought to him. We left his place convinced that he was too scared to mention it to anybody.

## XXI

In the evening of the 28th March, I, along with Sodhi Mohinder Singh, took a train for Calcutta from Main Mir Cantonment which is a small station a few miles from Lahore. In the morning of the 30th March, we got off the train at Burdwan. We had a wash at the station and took a local train to Calcutta after breakfast. From the station we went to the Central Hotel on Chittaranjan Avenue by taxi. During his earlier visits Sodhi Mohinder Singh had stayed in the same hotel. In the evening we went to 1 Woodburn Park by taxi. We sent a chit up for an interview with Mr. Sarat Bose. The servant took the slip. After a short while Mr. Sisir Bose came down and took us to a room on the ground floor. Netaji had told me that in case Mr. Sarat Bose was not immediately available, I should see Mr. Sisir Bose as the latter had full knowledge of everything concerning Netaji. Therefore I handed over to him the letters and conveyed all the news about Netaji's safe departure from Kabul for Germany via Russia. After a short while he went away asking us to wait a little as he wanted us to meet his father. He was soon back with Mr. Sarat Bose. I told them briefly once again about our experiences in Kabul and finally about Netaji's departure from Kabul. Both of them showed keen interest and asked many questions particularly about Netaji's health. Mr. Sarat Bose cautioned us against police surveillance around his house and said that it would be injudicious for us to meet him in his house any further. Normally he took his morning walk in the Victoria Memorial Gardens and asked us to meet him there the next morning.

Early next morning i.e. on the 31st March, I met him in the gardens. He wanted to know the details of our journey and stay in Kabul and about the arrangements for Netaji's escape across the Afghan frontier. I narrated to him the entire story of Netaji's journey from Peshawar to Kabul and further on. The next appointment was fixed for the following morning at Princep Ghat. On that day, the 1st of April, we were



to meet Mr. Sarat Bose first at the ghat and then wait for Mr. Satya Ranjan Baksi. The arrangement was made by Mr. Bose. He gave a description of me to Satya Babu and vice versa, but unfortunately our meeting with Satya Babu did not materialise as we failed to spot each other. During our second meeting Mr. Bose asked me if I needed any financial help. He said that he had overlooked a hint to this effect in Netaji's letter but that his wife thought that somewhere in the letter in Bengali Netaji had meant to convey that I should be given some financial help. This reminded me of what Netaji had told me about Mrs. Sarat Chandra Bose. Giving his impressions of her, he had told me of her capacity to judge a particular situation correctly, of her tact and her ability to adapt herself to new situations. Thus, she had been of tremendous help to him all his life. I told Mr. Bose that I might need two hundred rupees for my return journey.

As arranged with Mr. Bose I went to his chambers near the High Court at 10-30 a.m. on the 1st April, after my visit to the Princep Ghat. He had also informed Mr. Baksi about this engagement at his chambers and had asked him to meet me there since we could not recognise each other at the Ghat. This meeting was essential as I had told to Mr. Bose that we would need the services of two comrades who were to be taken to Kabul for training in sabotage work by the Italians and Germans. The arrangement was that one of the comrades was to be from the Punjab and the other one was to be deputed by Mr. Sarat Bose and Mr. Satya Baksi. Mr. Bose had told me that he would have a talk in this connection with Mr. Baksi who was in charge of such affairs.

Mr. Bose was not to come personally to the chambers. We met a middle-aged person wearing a moustache. As soon as I mentioned Mr. Bose he gave me two hundred rupees in cash. Mr. Satya Ranjan Baksi who was also in the chambers introduced himself to us. We had a brief talk. I apprised him of our discussion with Mr. Bose regarding training arrangements for one or two of our comrades by the Italians. The arrangement had been agreed to by the Italians and Netaji in my



presence. Mr. Baksi agreed to depute one person for this purpose. We gave him the contact address at Lahore and explained to him how he could locate the place. I also told him that he should reach Lahore before the 15th of April and ask for Hidayat Khan which was the assumed name of Gurcharan Singh Sainsra.

During my second meeting with Mr. Sarat Bose in the Victoria Memorial Gardens he told me that his first impression of me was not very favourable on account of my short stature and thin build. I told him how Netaji had also a similar impression of me at our first meeting and had wondered if I would be able to carry out the very difficult assignment. I had told him that he need not have any fears on this account as my past political work and the revolutionary tradition of my family were sufficient guarantees of my reliability. Mr. Bose immediately said that he had read about the great service rendered by me to Netaji in his letter and he was therefore sure of my capabilities. I commented that my short stature was probably an asset in my work as it did not invite attention.

I told Mr. Bose about my experience with Sardul Singh Caveeshar. He felt very sorry for the Sardar's attitude. He advised me not to visit Sardul Singh again, take good care of myself and not take unnecessary risks.

## XXII

I was feeling somewhat exhausted and wanted to relax for a day or two in Calcutta. We also did a little sight-seeing as it was my first visit to that city. We left Calcutta on the 4th of April and reached Lahore on the 6th. I stayed there with Gurcharan Singh Sainsra, Harbans Singh Karnan and Chain Singh Chain. I held prolonged discussions with them on our future course of action. It was decided that Sodhi Mohinder Singh would be the comrade from the Punjab for training in Kabul. He was also assigned the additional job of establishing contact with the Soviet Union. All our comrades were very perturbed and pained over our failure to establish communication



with the Soviet Embassy in Kabul. Before leaving Lahore I explained to Sodhi Mohinder Singh about the place and the person he was to come to at Peshawar. He was to come to Abad Khan. I also left instructions for the comrade from Bengal to come to Akbar Shah's place. Leaving Lahore in the evening of the 12th April, I reached Akbar Shah's place at Badrashi early next morning. Since I had to await the arrival of the comrade from Calcutta and had to plan an elaborate apparatus consisting of a chain of contacts at crucial places, I wanted a safe place where I could work in peace. I therefore decided to shift to my own home in village Ghalladher the same day. Akbar Shah agreed to this and contacted my younger brother Kishori Lal at Mardan. The latter escorted me to my village by car at night covering the last two miles on foot. We reached our village on the 13th of April after 9.00 p.m. Before leaving, I explained to Akbar Shah the course of action that we had decided upon for the future. I asked him to keep a number of comrades in readiness as we were heading for the final assault on British Imperialism. I also told Akbar Shah that it was not safe for me either to come to his place or visit my village. He should therefore arrange for a place which would be safe and where I could work without fear.

Next day my elder brother Jamna Das arrived and warned me that it was not safe for me to visit Akbar Shah or to stay in our village home. He informed me that although the police were not aware even to that day that I had escorted Netaji, they were looking for me, making frequent visits to the village and enquiring about me from friends and relations. I should therefore plan and organise my work in a way that ensured my safety. I told him that I had already requested Akbar Shah to arrange a safe place for me. I had come home because of the lack of a safer alternative. My brother thereupon visited Akbar Shah and discussed necessary arrangements for me. They fixed the date, time and place from where I would be picked up. Akbar Shah got in touch with Abad Khan who arranged a house for me behind Quissa Khwani Bazar at



Peshawar, owned by Mian Ferozeshah a big landlord and contractor of Ziarat Kaka Khel.

Under the cover of darkness, I walked up two miles from my village with my elder brother reaching the pucca road at the chosen spot on the 16th April. Abad Khan had already arrived there to take me to Peshawar by car. I left for Peshawar with Abad Khan while my brother went back to our village.

At Peshawar I awaited the arrival of Sodhi Mohinder Singh and the comrade from Calcutta. Sodhi arrived on the 17th April. We planned the establishment of a number of centres in the whole of the tribal area between Peshawar and Kabul, a secret machinery to shelter our underground comrades and for organising mass anti-British activity in the area. We organised centres at Peshawar, Bandagai, Swal Quilla, Barang, Bajaur, Safi and Kuda Khel. A number of trusted comrades who had creditable record of work in the anti-British struggle over the years and who stood for militant action for Indian independence were taken into confidence. These comrades had always been in the forefront of the national struggle. As a result their reputation was high and they were very widely known in the N.W.F.P. and in the tribal areas. Among these comrades were Akbar Shah, Abdul Razad, Sayyad Murtaza, Ummar Khan, Mohammad Kamil, Abdul Latif Afandi and Miran Jan. Each comrade was put in charge of a centre in his respective area and was made responsible for building up his centre for our future work. The comrade from Calcutta Santimoy Ganguli arrived in Peshawar on the 18th April. In the process of organising and extending our secret apparatus we enlisted a number of other comrades. One of these was Mir Ghazan Khan of village Maneri, Tehsil Sawabi. During our next journey across the border we intended to take the longer route in order to cover many more tribal areas, to extend our influence and create bases for the coming struggle. The route we decided upon was Peshawar, Mardan, Hathian, Barrang, Bandagai, Safi, Mohammad, Arkhi and then to Jallalabad and Kabul.



## XXIII

We started on our journey from Peshawar on the 20th April. Before leaving we decided that in case any of us was arrested we were not to say anything about Subhas Chandra Bose or that we were concerned in any way with his work. This was one of the many decisions we took. By the evening we reached village Lalajan Kooroona near Malakand pass where we met Samunder Khan and Ziarat Gul. This contact was arranged for us by Mir Ghazan. Samundar Khan was a Congressman and a very close associate of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. His nephew Ziarat Gul was a left extremist and anti-Congress. With Ziarat Gul, we felt, we were in safe hands. We stayed the night with them. Mir Ghazan who was also with us was to accompany us upto Bandagai in Bajaur tribal area.

The next morning, i.e. 21st April, we left in a tonga driven by Ziarat Gul. They also gave us a guide for our further journey. At about 7.30 a.m. we reached a point near the tribal border. Ziarat Gul came back with the tonga while we continued our journey on foot through rocky terrain. We reached Dir Ghatral river by about 10 p.m. For crossing the river there was a rope and a cradle. We crossed one by one. Santi Babu felt very uncomfortable in the heat and took a jump into the ice cold water. He was almost frozen. We continued our trek towards Barang in Bajaur tribal territory. We stayed the night in a hut with some mountain people who gave us tea and food. The next morning, i.e. the 22nd April, we continued our journey and reached Barang by noon. We spent the night there with Abdul Latif Afandi with whom we had very purposeful discussions. We informed him of our plans and his own role in this struggle. He expressed his readiness to do everything possible in the coming fight. Afandi, who had visited Turkey and other countries was one of the stalwarts of the Red Shirt Movement. He was for all-out militant action and was very pleased to meet us. He took very great pains to make our stay comfortable. On the 23rd April, early in the morning, we left for Ghingai. There we had our tea and rest with Ghulamul Rehman who was a lieutenant of Sanobar Hussain and



was known to Afandi. Thereafter we resumed our journey and reached Swal Killa in the afternoon where we met Sanobar Hussain, Ghulam Murtaza and Ummar Khan. Abdul Latif Afandi and Maulana Ghulamul Rehman had accompanied us to Swal Killa from their respective places. We stayed here till the 25th April. All of us together had useful discussions here and finalised our future plans. All of us were of the view that it was a good chance to strike when the British were engaged in a war and that we should not allow the opportunity to slip from our hands. Mir Ghazan who had accompanied us so far was introduced to all the others and sent back to his place via Dir State. Sanobar Hussain was entrusted with the task of providing selfless workers in Kabul at the time of need. He was to build up a cadre of such workers. The other very important work assigned to him was organisation of centres in the different tribal areas. He promised to work to the best of his capacity and to lend active support to the movement. Sanobar Hussain was at one time President of the Frontier Province Naujawan Bharat Sabha and a very experienced, useful and important link in our organisation. I confided in him the story of Netaji's escape.

Afandi and Ghulamul Rehman accompanied us to the next village of Chingai where we stayed one night with a friend of Sanobar Hussain. On the 26th April, we trekked from dawn to dusk, reaching the house of Mohammad Kamil of the Safi tribe. The latter was a supporter and in the confidence of Sanobar Hussain and Afandi. On the 27th April we went to Abdul Razak of the same tribe who owned an arms and ammunition factory. On the 28th April, we reached Kudakhel at 11 a.m. along with Abdul Razak. Here we met Mira Jan who was a very resourceful anti-British tribal chief. He had good education and wielded wide influence in his area. He inherited his strong anti-British views from his forefathers and had lost many of his kith and kin in the struggle against the British. He received us very warmly and entertained us during the day we spent with him. Afandi, Abdul Razak and Ghulam Murtaza stayed back to return to their respective



places while the three of us resumed our journey. Mira Jan arranged for the services of a guide also. We left Kudakhel about 9 p.m. on the 30th April, travelled the whole night and reached Arkhi on the banks of the river Kabul on the 1st May at about noon. We did not enter the village. It took us considerable time to make arrangements for crossing the river. There were no arrangements at the crossing site. We had to send the guide to the village to seek help in crossing the river with the use of inflated animal hide. It was nearly 5.00 p.m. before we could cross the river. I should mention here that we had adopted the following code names for the three of us at Peshawar :

Santimoy Ganguli :	Abdul Rehman
Sodhi Mohinder Singh :	Shah Zaman
Bhagat Ram Talwar :	Rahmat Khan

We continued our journey along the river and asked the guide to take us to a place where we could have rest and food. We had already trekked a very long distance without rest. Santi Babu was particularly feeling it. Our guide took us to a village and introduced us to a young man who knew Mira Jan. He was told that we were Mira Jan's guests. After dinner we had hardly slept a few hours when we were woken up for our onward journey. We did not have complete rest. We hired a donkey from our host for Santi Babu who needed some help. But we had hardly walked a few hours on a good track along the foot hills when the donkey saw some other donkeys at a camp pitched by a caravan. The donkey with Santi Babu on its back took off all on a sudden with a tremendous speed. We got worried about Santi Babu and ran after the donkey to save Santi Babu. We eventually found Santi Babu with his arms around the donkey's neck. He looked terrified. We dispensed with the donkey. The donkey man told us that a little ahead there was a pucca road and that he would guide us up to that road. When we reached the road it was still dark and we were still very tired. Jallalabad was hardly four miles from here now. We went under a bridge on the road over a canal, cleared some space for us with the help of a torch and slept.



When we got up it was already 8-00 a.m. We washed in the canal and started on our journey to Jallalabad where we reached at about 10-00 a.m. Since I had already visited Haji Mohammad Amin on my return journey from Kabul, we decided it was not necessary to see him again. Since we still felt very tired, we hired a room in Jallalabad and slept the whole day. In the evening we went round the city. I showed my comrades the hotel where Netaji and I had spent two nights during his escape to Kabul. After a good breakfast on the 3rd of May we proceeded to Sultanpur. We travelled in tongas as we did not want to take truck-rides from Jallalabad. This time I had two comrades with me who did not know the language. Even then I felt somewhat safer than on the previous occasion when I was escorting Netaji. From Sultanpur we walked up to Fatehabad where we went to a *Cha-khana* and asked for tea. People there generally took green tea without milk. They take sugar in the first cup but in subsequent cups even sugar is discarded. Sodhi Mohinder Singh (Shah Zaman) insisted on asking for more sugar. I cautioned him that we should not do anything which would not be in keeping with the usual Afghan customs. He somehow did not appreciate my suggestion and felt that I was keeping him from having food and drinks of his own choice. Similarly when we were having our meals at Swal Killa, I noticed that Santi Babu (Abdul Rehman) was making balls of rice with his hands in the usual manner of an East Bengali and threw them into his mouth. I later asked him to watch Afghans and their ways and manners and try to follow them so that we did not arouse suspicion. I discussed such problems in detail with Sodhi Mohinder Singh. But he had his own views and said that everybody could not be expected to behave in the same manner in respect of food.

About noon we managed to get a truck ride from Fatehabad and reached Budkhak about midnight. This was a very opportune time for crossing this barrier, where all sorts of enquiries are made. Every one had to record his name and address in a register maintained for the purpose. On this occasion also we managed to give the slip and cross the barrier without



getting our names recorded as most of the staff posted there were asleep. Like other passengers we slept in a Cha-khana. In the morning of the 4th of May we reached Kabul at about 10-00 a.m. by tonga and went straight to Sarai Zazian where Netaji and I had stayed. This time we selected the last room in the row on the upper floor. About 1-00 p.m. I went to Uttam Chand at his shop and told him about my two comrades. He asked me jocularly if they were also 'deaf and dumb'. The same evening I met Creshini at his place and informed him that as arranged between him and Netaji I had brought two of our comrades for training purposes. He told me that he would chalk out a programme with his Minister the day after and that I should see him in the evening on the 5th May. At the meeting with him the next evening he told me that we should come to Paghman\* on the 6th May at about 2-00 p.m. He described to me the house where we were to go. He also told me that a party from the Legation would also arrive there at the same time. On the 6th May the three of us took a bus, reached Paghman, a distance of nearly 25 miles, at the appointed time and located the residence. The other party also arrived at the same time and we followed them into the house. In the party there were the Italian Minister Mr. Quaroni, his wife, Mr. Anzilotti and a German introduced to us as Rasmuss, a new-comer to Kabul. The latter told us that he had been in India, was in Calcutta for a long time on business and could speak broken Bengali. He said that he had come from Germany to deal with us. I introduced to them my comrades Sodhi Mohinder Singh and Santi Babu and told them that these comrades had come there for training to be arranged by them as planned earlier. They promised to start the training soon. But as it transpired later, the plan never materialised. I briefly described to them our journey through the tribal area on our way back to Kabul and asked them to convey to Netaji an account of our work. They told us about Netaji's

\* Paghman is a very beautiful hill resort near Kabul. Embassy official, the aristocracy and high Afghan Government officials came to this hill station on week-ends and on vacations particularly during the summer.



journey to Europe. The journey, we were informed, had been comfortable. He had travelled by train from the Soviet border and had stayed in Moscow for two days. From there he had gone to Berlin and had already met German leaders. We spent about two hours with them and returned to our *Sarai* in Kabul by bus after fixing up the time and place for the next meeting.

Our second meeting with the same party was held on the 8th May. This time they picked us up and drove us to Paghman and back as we had told them that we had difficulties in reaching Paghman on our own. Nothing new transpired at this meeting. It was more or less a repetition of our discussion at the first meeting. Since we were to be in Kabul for longer periods now and it was neither comfortable nor safe to stay in *sarais* indefinitely, I asked them if they could help us in finding some suitable place for our stay. They said that they could not be of much help to us in that respect. In the meantime, however, Uttam Chand had rented a flat for starting his new wholesale business. He offered it to us for the time being and we shifted to a room in the flat. We stayed there for nearly a month.

During our stay in Kabul I made frequent visits to Haji Saheb and Sher Afzal Khan and held discussions with them on the political situation and our role in it. The Italians asked us about the nature of help that we expected of them. We told them that that depended on the nature of our relationship worked out by Netaji in Europe. They were conscious of their being physically cut off from Europe and of their inability to offer much practical or material help in the shape of arms etc. They offered us financial help on a limited scale. But we told them that we would not get involved in any arrangement of any kind without instructions from Netaji. We therefore advised them that they should come to some settlement with Netaji through their governments and get us instructions from him in regard to our relationship with them. They agreed to the proposition and told us that they would let us know after consultations with their government.

We stayed in Kabul for some time more but did not get



any news about or instructions from, Netaji. We therefore decided to go back to the tribal areas and India which were the fields of our political work. At that time there was no political work for us in Kabul. We talked to the Italians about it. They asked us to see them some time later, may be a month or more when they expected to receive necessary instructions from Netaji. The Italians never started the training course for our comrades for which they had come to Kabul. We therefore decided that Sodhi would stay on in Kabul for establishing contacts with the Russian Embassy (which was one of the major duties assigned to him by the party) and I along with Santi Babu should return to India and make a report to the party and to Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose.

#### XXIV

On the 1st of June, Santi Babu and I left Kabul in the afternoon reaching Budkhak the same evening. From there we got a truck-ride to Jallalabad in the morning of the 2nd June. We went to see Haji Saheb at Lalman. But he had gone on a long tour. I asked his son-in-law to lend us the services of a guide to escort us up to Arkhi. We walked down to Arkhi reaching there by the evening. We crossed the Kabul river and continued our journey till late evening. We eventually reached a small hamlet which had a mosque and a well. Here we washed, had our meals and stayed for the night. Very early in the morning on the 3rd June, we left this place reaching Kudakhel about noon. We had sent the guide back from Arkhi. Miran Jan was very happy to see us return safely. In the night about 2 a.m. we resumed our journey and reached Gandab. Instead of taking a bus there, we continued our journey on foot reaching Shah Kadar about 5 p.m. There we took a tonga for Charsadda. We changed into another tonga there and which took us to Mardan on the 4th June by about 9 p.m. It was with a view to arriving in Mardan in the cover of darkness that we had to walk nearly 18 miles from Gandab to Shahkadar. We did not want to risk travelling by bus lest we came upon some acquaintances.



We slipped into my elder brother's house at Mardan and stayed the night there. On the 5th June Santi Babu shaved, changed into his usual dress and left for Calcutta. I stayed there for a few days and thereafter left for Lahore reaching there on 13th June. I made a detailed report to the party comrades and stayed there for a couple of days. By that time the Russo-German war had started and our thinking and planning came up for a drastic change. Very long and serious discussions took place amongst us and we had to revise our line of action in view of the change in world affairs. After a few days I left for Calcutta where I met Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose in his office in the evening. I narrated our experiences to him. Mr. Bose was of the opinion that it was essential for me to visit Kabul again for any message from Netaji. I had taken a room in a hotel as on the last occasion but on Mr. Bose's advice I was shifted to the house of a contact in Calcutta. Santi Babu was also staying there. I stayed there for 2 or 3 days and then returned to Lahore where I stayed with comrades for about a week. I ascertained the views of my party comrades on the world situation and the role of the party in the changed circumstances. I was of the view that we should continue with our anti-British activities. Most of our comrades agreed with this view-point at that time. Thereafter I went to Peshawar, stayed there for two days and left for Kabul. I arrived in Kabul on my third visit on the 7th July, 1941.

I stayed a night in the *sarai* and then shifted to the room where Sodhi was putting up in the flat rented by Uttam Chand. I contacted Creshini who told me that he would talk to the Minister about my arrival and asked me to see him the next day. The Minister had told him that he had received a message from Netaji and that I should contact him in Paghman any day in the afternoon. I and Sodhi Mohinder Singh went to the Minister who showed us a written message from Netaji congratulating me on my successful return to India and the trip back to Kabul under very difficult and trying circumstances. The message, stated to have been received by wireless, further mentioned that he had reached an understanding



in Berlin that they and we would help one another as equals, that whatever help we got from them would be on reciprocal basis and that whatever steps we took would be entirely with a view to achieving the independence of our country. The message further stated that I should concentrate on the work in tribal areas for building up a strong anti-British movement.

Sodhi Mohinder Singh and I came back to Kabul after some further talks with the Minister and after fixing up arrangements for contacting us in the tribal areas whenever such necessity arose. The Minister told me that I could come to him directly or through Mr. Creshini as before. Sodhi Mohinder Singh and I started planning for our return journey ; but we found ourselves in a difficult situation on account of an incident that had occurred recently.

The German Legation wanted to send some of their own men to the Faqir of Ipi in Waziristan. Sher Afzal Khan was escorting a couple of Germans when, on the way, an encounter took place between the party and the Afghan police. One German was killed in this encounter. Because of this incident the police got alerted and enforced stringent restrictions on movements in and out of the capital city of Kabul. The check was exercised at Budkhak. We found ourselves in a predicament and decided to lie low for some days and watch the situation. After a few days of waiting we decided to dodge the police by walking some part of the journey and by-passing the Budkhak police check-post. This plan proved successful. We took a truck about 7 to 8 miles beyond Budkhak which took us to Jallalabad. While Sodhi Mohinder Singh who was to convey the message to Calcutta returned to India, I stayed back for my work in the tribal areas.



APPENDIX I

GERMAN FOREIGN OFFICE DOCUMENTS\*

(a)

Telegram

(Secret matter for the Chief)

Kabul, the 5th February 1941 1.50 hrs.

Arrival, „ 5th „ „ 15.10 hrs.

No. 39 dated 4.2.

Strictly confidential.

Police division VII 439g Ref to telegram dated 2nd, No. 31

Advised Bose urgently about the local Afghan security system after he had visited me rashly at the embassy, asked him to keep himself hidden amongst Indian friends in the Bazar and contacted the Russian Ambassador in his behalf. The latter suspects a British plot behind Bose's desire to travel through Russia, to bring about a conflict between Russia and Afghanistan, because Bose could be taken across the border only very secretly in view of the local situation (hardly any communication, strictest passport and border checks). Ambassador has telegraphically informed Moscow about his suspicion about Bose and has asked for instructions. It is indispensable to take up the matter with Moscow as a followup for making journey possible. The Italian Ambassador has informed Rome.

Pilger

Brought out in six copies :

Out of that have gone :

1. to Police VII (working staff)
2. „ Reich's Foreign Minister
3. „ State Security Service
4. „ Authority of the Reich Foreign Ministry
5. „ Leader of the Police department
6. „ Director of Police

This is No. 3.

139117

(b)

U.St. S. Pol. Nr. 76

Berlin, the 8th February 1941

The Italian charge d' affairs spoke to me today about the desire of the Indian, Bose, to come to Germany via Russia, and asked whether the Italian government in Moscow could do something to promote the matter.

I have told him that, from our side, we are considering a probing in Moscow, but that a decision by the Reich Foreign Ministry in this connexion is not yet available.

If the Reich Foreign Minister permits the step in Moscow, then



T e l e g r a m m  
(Geh.Ch.V.)

Kabul, den 5. Februar 1941 1.50 Uhr  
Ankunft: " 5. " " 15.10 Uhr

Nr. 39 vom 4.2. Streng geheim!

Pol VII 439 g

Auf Telegr. vom 2. Nr. 31 +)

Habe Bose nachdem er unvorsichtigerweise sich auf Gesandtschaft besucht hatte, bei hiesigen afghanischen Überwachungssystem dringend angeraten, sich im Bazar bei indigenen Freunden versteckt zu halten und habe für ihn bei dem russischen Botschafter vorgefühlt. Dieser befürchtet hinter Wunsch Boses zu Durchreise Russland englische Intrige, um Konflikt Russland Afghanistan zu schaffen, da Bose nur heimlich bei hiesigen Verhältnissen (kaum Reiseverkehr, strengste Pass- und Grenskontrolle) über Grenze gebracht werden kann. Botschafter hat Moskau telegraphisch sein Misstrauen gegen Bose Ärtgeteilt, und Weisung erbeten. Fühlungnahme von dort mit Moskau daher sehr möglichung Weise unerlässlich. Der italienische Gesandte hat Rom befürwortend verständigt.

Pilger

rgestellt in 6 Stück:  
von sind gegangen:

- 1 an Pol VII (Arb.St.)
- 2 " B.A.M.
- 3 " St.S.
- 4 " B.R.A.M.
- 5 " Leiter Abt.Pol.
- 6 " Dg.Pol.

es ist Nr. ... ?



Berlin, den 8. Februar 1941.

Der Italiener *Giulio* Geschäftsträger sprach mich heute auf den Wunsch des Herrn Bode an, über Rußland nach Deutschland zu kommen, und fragte, ob die Italienische Regierung in Moskau etwas tun könne, um die Angelegenheit zu fördern.

Ich habe ihm gesagt, daß wir unsererseits in Moskau eine Sondierung erwägen, daß aber eine Entscheidung des Herrn Reichsaußenministers hierüber noch nicht vorliege.

Wenn der Herr Reichsaußenminister den Schritt in Moskau genehmigt, sollte meines Erachtens dem Italiener gesagt werden, der Italienische Botschafter in Moskau sollte sich mit dem Grafen Schulenburg in Verbindung setzen und einen Schritt in Moskau seinerseits nur unternehmen, wenn Graf Schulenburg dies für nützlich halte.

Hiermit

den Herrn Staatssekre;

mit der Bitte um Einverständnis vorgelegt.

*Wormann*

Durchschlag an

Dg. Pol.

Pol.VII

Pol.V

22222



**Telegramm (Geh.Ch.V.)**

<b>Moskau, den 3. März 1941</b>	<b>23.05 Uhr</b>
<b>Ankunft den 4. " "</b>	<b>1.00 Uhr</b>

**Nr. 470 vom 3.3.**

**Geheim.**

**Auf Erlasse Pol VII 713. g vom 18. Februar  
und in Anschluss an Telegramm vom 10.  
Nr. 278.**

**Aussenkommissariat mitteilt, dass Sowjet-  
regierung bereit ist, Subhas Bose Durchreise-  
sichtvermerk zur Reise von Afghanistan nach  
Deutschland zu geben .**

**Aussenkommissariat ist gebeten  
gen Durchführung Sowjet  
anzuweisen.**

**Schulenburg**



Telegramm  
(Geh.Ch.V.)

1/2

Moskau, den 31. März 1941 21.48 Uhr  
Ankunft: " 31. " " 24.00 "

Nr. 744 vom 31.3.41 C i t o i

\*) Pol VII 1277 g Verschlusssache geheim.  
Auf Tel. vom 25. Nr.602\*)

Bose im Besitz italienischen Passes auf  
Orlando Massotta hat heute in Begleitung Ingenieurs  
Wenger auf Botschaft vorgesprochen. Wenger und Bose  
im Sinne Drahterlassen verständigt. Schwarz und Hilpert  
sollen nach Mitteilung Wengers über Persönlichkeit  
H. nicht unterrichtet sein. Von Warnung wurde daher  
abgesehen.

Abreise am 31. März 23 Uhr 05 Ankunft Minsk  
am 1. April 23 Uhr 10.

Bose beabsichtigt, sich in Berlin sogleich im  
Auswärtigen Amt zu melden.

Schulenburg.

Hergestellt in 11 Stück  
Davon sind gegangen:

1 an Pol VII g  
2 " RAM  
3 " St.S.  
4 " Chef A.O.  
5 " RAM  
6 " Leiter Abt. Pol.  
7 " " " Recht  
8 " " " Pers.  
9 " " " Presse  
10 " " " Dtschl.  
11 " Dg. Pol.  
Dies ist Nr. 744...



according to my opinion, the Italians should be told that the Italian ambassador in Moscow should get in touch with Count Schulenburg and on his part, undertake a step in Moscow, if Count Schulenburg considers this useful.

Forwarded herewith to the State Secretary with the request for agreement.

Sd. Woermann

Copy to :

Director Police  
Police VII  
Police V

139118

(c)

Telegram

To be handled  
as sealed item.

(Secret matter for the Chief)

Moscow, the 3rd March 1941 23.05 hrs.

Arrival, the 4th March 1941 1.00 hrs.

No. 470 of 3.3.

Confidential

On ordinance Police VII 713.g of 18th February and in connection with Telegram of the 10th No. 278.

The Commissariat for External Affairs informs that the Soviet government is ready to give Subhas Bose the visa for journey from Afghanistan to Germany through Russia.

The Commissariat has been requested to instruct the Soviet Embassy in Kabul accordingly.

Schulenburg

First 4 lines not clear

Leader of the Personnel Department

„ „ Defence „

„ „ Cultural „

„ „ Press „

„ „ Germany „

Chief of the Protocol

Director of Police

Work specimen with Pol. VII g

139121



(d)

Telegram

(Secret matter for the Chief)

Moscow, the 31st March 1941 21.48 hrs.

Arrival, the 31st „ 1941 24.00 hrs.

No. 744 of 31.3.41

Ex.press

Police VII 1277 g

Strictly confidential

Referring to telegram of 25th No. Co 2

Bose possessing an Italian passport under the name of Orlando Mazzotta dropped in at the embassy today accompanied by Engineer Wenger. Have informed Bose and Wenger on the lines of wire decree. According to Wenger's statement, Schwarz and Hilpert are not aware of the identity of Mazzotta. Warning from here was not considered necessary.

Departure on 31st March 23.05 hrs

Arrival Malkinia on 1st April 23.10 hrs.

Bose intends to call immediately at the Foreign Office in Berlin.

Schulenburg

Brought out in 11 copies

Among those have gone :

No. 1 to Police VII g.

No. 2 „ Reich Foreign Minister

„ 3 „ State Security Service

„ 4 „ Chief of the Foreign Organisation

„ 5 „ Authority of the Reich Foreign Ministry

„ 6 „ Leader of the Police department

„ 7 „ „ „ „ Law „

„ 8 „ „ „ „ Personnel „

„ 9 „ „ „ „ Press „

„ 10 „ „ „ „ Germany „

„ 11 „ Director of Police

139126

This is No. 3

\* From the Microfilm library of Netaji Research Bureau and by courtesy of the Department of Political Archives of the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany, Bonn.



## APPENDIX 2

**REPORT OF Mr. SANTIMOY GANGULI\***

1. As to the contact address in Lahore, I was not given the names of Mr. Gurcharan Singh Sainsra, alias Hidyat Khan. I heard of him later from Mr. Bhagat Ram. The address that I was given from Calcutta was that of Mr. Balavadra, who took me to another comrade called Mr. Dev Dutt.

2. If Mr. Sodhi Mohinder Singh was the person selected for training by the Punjab Group, the fact was not known to me at the time. On the other hand, Mr. Singh told me more than once that he was interested in crossing over to the Soviet Union because the Punjab police had been looking for him in connection with a murder case. That was also the reason why he stayed back in Kabul while Mr. Bhagat Ram and myself came back to India.

Somehow Mr. Sodhi Mohinder Singh did not consider himself a participant in our programme. That is why he very often could not accept the discipline sought to be imposed by Mr. Bhagat Ram, in view of the latter's knowledge and experience of the land and the people in the tribal areas and in Afghanistan. Sodhi Mohinder Singh considered himself a superior kind of revolutionary who had been to the various parts of the world and was trained in Moscow. Whatever Mr. Bhagat Ram might say now of his being the comrade chosen from the Punjab to participate in the training course, I remember clearly that Mr. Singh's mission was to get out of the country to avoid being arrested by the police on a murder charge. I remember this more particularly because I had an argument with him on this point. I could not appreciate a revolutionary leaving his sphere of activities for fear of being arrested or hanged. I was brought up in the tradition of Indian martyrs like Benoy Bose. Even when late Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose offered to finance his escape from the country and all necessary arrangements for the escape had also been completed by his comrades, Benoy Bose refused to leave the country and eventually died fighting in the

\* Mr. Santimoy Ganguli became a member of the revolutionary group in Bengal known as Bengal Volunteers in 1927 when he was a school student. He was repeatedly arrested for his involvement in the revolutionary movement. After the formation of the Forward Bloc he was put in charge of its students' wing. After Netaji's escape from India he was selected for special tasks and sent to Kabul. The assignment was to organise and maintain a link between Kabul and the revolutionary centre in Calcutta and also to organise sabotage of British military and strategic objects. After his return to Calcutta in June 1941 and till November 1942 he travelled between Calcutta and Lahore several times to maintain liaison between the two revolutionary centres. After the defection of the Punjab group he tried to establish contact with Netaji and the movement in East Asia through Burma. He was finally arrested in November 1942 and released in May 1946.



famous "Verandah Battle." I, therefore, did not have much respect for somebody who called himself a revolutionary of international standard and yet could run away not because he wanted to organise a more intense struggle elsewhere but because, as he told me, he did not want to be arrested on a murder charge.

3. Organisation of a secret machinery to shelter underground comrades and for mass anti-British activity in the tribal areas between Peshawar and Kabul was only at the talking stage in Peshawar. While the centre at Peshawar did exist even before Netaji's plan to escape from India, the other centres were organised or sought to be organised during our journey from Peshawar to Kabul. Mr. Bhagat Ram might have kept in touch with these centres while he travelled between Peshawar and Kabul subsequently.

4. To mention Abdul Latif Afandi (Efendi ?) and Mir Azan Khan along with Mian Akbar Shah and others in connection with the organisation of different centres is rather confusing. Akbar Shah and others belonged to and were staying in, India. Abdul Latif Afandi originally belonged to India but went over to the tribal area to avoid political persecution by the British. Mir Azan Khan was an independent tribal chief in Kuda Khel who had extensive connections in Afghanistan and also with the different tribal chiefs.

Apart from Mir Ghazan Khan, I also remember another person whom I met in Peshawar and if I am not mistaken his name was given as Mohd. Shah. It is likely that Mohd. Shah and Mohd. Kamil are one and the same person.

5. Mir Azan Khan was not only an educated and resourceful tribal chief with anti-British feelings, he also had a very realistic approach to the question of organising a war against the British. He told us that he had no doubt in his mind that it was his destiny to die fighting against the feranghis as his father and grandfather had died before him. Yet, he said, he would not agree to go into anything rashly and without preparation. He said that the tribals were very emotional and their feelings against the feranghis were so pronounced that anybody could quickly incite them to a rash act against the British. But he, Mir Azan Khan, would have no part in such adventures. He did not mind his people losing their lives or himself dying in the battlefield. But he wanted to be sure that he was taking part in a programme which had some possibility of success. He also asked me some very straight and probing questions regarding the relationship that would exist between a free India and the tribal people. By expressing his feelings frankly and asking me the questions he aroused in me a deep respect for his pragmatic approach to political matters.

6. I do not think that we left Kuda Khel on the 30th of April and reached the banks of the river Kabul on the 1st May at about noon. I clearly remember having reached Kabul on the 1st of May. It is, therefore



most likely that we left Kuda Khel on the night of the 26th or 27th of April, 1941.

7. Mr. Bhagat Ram has got the code names all confused. The names were :—

Real Name		Code Name
Bhagat Ram Talwar	...	Rehmat Khan
Sodhi Mohinder Singh	...	Md. Khan
Santimoy Ganguli	...	Sher Zaman

8. I do not remember whether Mr. Bhagat Ram went to see Creshini on the very day we reached Kabul. But I am sure that the meeting at Paghman did not take place so soon after our arrival. A sore had developed on my right foot and I had high fever. It took me about a week to recover and the meeting took place sometime after that. Between our arrival and the meeting at Paghman, the Italian Legation informed us (I do not remember whether it was through Uttam Chand or Creshini) that they had transmitted the news of our arrival to Netaji. A few days later they again informed us that Netaji had acknowledged the message and asked for the name of the person who had come from Calcutta. We were also informed that Netaji wanted to know about his friends in Calcutta and particularly if Mr. Satya Ranjan Baksı was in or out of prison. I remember having written out a reply to this message which Mr. Bhagat Ram sent to the Italian Legation either through Uttam Chand or Creshini.

9. The German (whether his name was Rasmuss or not) said that he had very good connections with some influential people of Nepal who had promised him all sorts of help in any operation against the British. He gave us a photograph of himself with a Nepali gentleman and said that the latter's name was Suba Sahib Ganjaman Singh (Could it be Ganeshman Singh who became a member of the Nepalese Cabinet after the Ranas were ousted?). Our attempt to contact this Nepalese gentleman failed because the intermediary selected by Mr. Satya Ranjan Baksı for this purpose, Mr. Triloki Singh developed cold feet. When I met him in Delhi under instructions of Mr. Baksı and gave him the password, he said he knew Mr. Baksı all right but he did not know the password.

10. Regarding our alternative accommodation, I remember that the rent for the flat which Uttam Chand had arranged for us was to have been paid by the Italians in consideration of his allowing us to stay with him.

11. On our way back, we met Sanobar Hussain at the house of Mir Azan Khan. Sanobar Hussain heard all the news from us and also told us that he was going ahead with preparations concerning the organisation of pockets of resistance which would also be organised as centres of training for sabotage.

12. Mr. Bhagat Ram came to Calcutta after he had visited Kabul once again. He told us of the miscarriage of the German plan of transporting



men, materials and money to the tribal area. He also told us that Sher Afzal Khan and some friends of his had been arrested in that connection. Therefore, journey between Peshawar and Kabul would be more dangerous than in the past.

During this visit to Calcutta, I took up with Mr. Bhagat Ram the issue of the Russo-German war and the likely stand of the Kirti-Kisan Party. Mr. Bhagat Ram told me that whatever be the decision of that party, he was committed to the anti-British stand and, as a Pathan, he could not rest in peace until his brother's death was avenged. He also gave me the name of a person whom I could contact in case the attitude of the Kirti Group proved to be unhelpful. As far as I remember, this person's name was Mr. Hansraj and he was to be contacted at Kohat.

After Mr. Bhagat Ram's departure from Calcutta, I went to Lahore thrice and contacted representatives of the Kirti Group. During my second visit, we decided on having a committee consisting of one representative each from Bengal, Punjab and NWFP. I represented Bengal on the committee, and Punjab was represented by Mr. Gurcharan Singh Sainsra alias Hidyat Khan. A fairly elderly gentleman came from the NWFP but I do not remember his name. The first meeting of this committee took place in a village about three hours' drive from Lahore. At that meeting Mr. Gurcharan Singh mentioned the Russo-German conflict and said that in view of Germany's attack on Soviet Russia we should try our best to help Russia win the war. I put forward the view that until and unless India became free, there was nothing we could do to help Russia. Mr. Gurcharan Singh's reply to this was that freedom would be of no use to India if Russia was defeated and overrun by Germany. Mr. Singh was so excited over this point that I thought it useless to argue further and left it at that. Mr. Bhagat Ram was at that time away in Kabul and I found no kindred soul in Lahore to whom I could unburden myself.

Back in Calcutta, I gave the details to my seniors, namely, Mr. Jatish Guha, Mr. Sasanka Dasgupta, Mr. Chandra Sekhar Sen and others, all of whom agreed with me that we should not break with the Kirti Group till Mr. Bhagat Ram's return from Kabul. All of us were confident that Mr. Bhagat Ram would stand by us and we could then very easily dispense with the cooperation of the Kirti Group.

13. I again went to Lahore in January, 1942. This was my third visit. The Punjab friends, in spite of the difference in outlook, were very friendly.

I met some of these friends, one of whom was known to me as Mr. Vishwambhar. The names of the others I do not know. After the preliminary meeting and exchange of formalities, Mr. Vishwambhar told me that they had been advised by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to fall in line with the C.P.I. thesis of "Peoples' War". I was extremely shocked as, in spite of all their sympathy for the Soviet Union, these friends had



thoroughly disapproved of the C.P.I. stand in the past. However, I kept my feelings to myself and asked him bluntly whether it would now be a part of their programme to divulge to the police all the secrets that we shared. Mr. Vishwambhar told me that they would not betray us but would dissociate themselves from any further activity in furtherance of Netaji's programme. I heaved a sigh of relief. I still had a lingering hope in my mind that everything would be all right if only I could meet Mr. Bhagat Ram whose parting words to me in Calcutta still rang in my ears. I asked Mr. Vishwambhar when it would be possible to meet Mr. Bhagat Ram. Sri Vishwambhar told me that Mr. Bhagat Ram was working in the tribal areas. He was eager to come back but was not being given permission to do so. In view of the impression Mr. Bhagat Ram had created upon me regarding his relations with the Kirti Group, I failed to understand how these people could withhold permission to him to come back to India and how their permission could matter to him in any way.

14. Mr. Bhagat Ram also says that he stayed back for work in the tribal areas. He, however, does not explain the nature of the work. The encounter between the German and the Afghan police did not take place at the time when Mr. Bhagat Ram and Sodhi Mohinder Singh were returning to India. It took place much earlier and the incident was narrated to us by Mr. Bhagat Ram in Calcutta.

Sodhi Mohinder Singh never came to Calcutta after March 1941<sup>1</sup>. He was arrested early in 1942 at the Delhi Railway Station. Immediately after his arrest, all our senior friends including Mr. Satya Ranjan Baksi, Mr. Jatish Guha, Mr. Sasanka Dasgupta and others were arrested. Mr. Baksi and Mr. Guha were taken to the Red Fort in Delhi for interrogation. There Mr. Guha was confronted with a tall big man. The police asked that man whether he could recognise Mr. Guha. The stranger replied in the negative. From the description of the stranger given by Mr. Guha to me, I could get the outlines of the appearance of a man whom I had known very closely.

The sudden decision of the Kirti Kisan Group to fall in line with the C.P.I. stand at the time and merge itself with the C.P.I. and its coincidence with the arrest of Mr. Achhar Singh Cheena would be a very interesting study. I had also been told that before Mr. Bhagat Ram's last visit to Kabul, Mr. Sodhi Mohinder Singh had been able to get in touch with the Russian Ambassador. It would be interesting to know what transpired at the interview he had with the Russian diplomat.

15. I met Mr. Abad Khan at 1, Woodburn Park (residence of late Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose) sometime in 1947. Mr. Abad Khan gave me a

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Sisir K. Bose says that when Mr. Bhagat Ram met him on the 31st March 1941 at 1 Woodburn Park, there was a tall big man in European dress with him. Shri Bhagat Ram later told him that he was Sodhi Mohinder Singh.



detailed account of how he had been arrested and tortured by the police. He said that he was extremely shocked to find that the police could confront him with certain information, which, he had thought, was known only to one or two very trusted comrades.

16. In his prelude to the story of Netaji's escape, Mr. Bhagat Ram gives the impression that Netaji had a fixed idea in his mind of going over to the Soviet Union to secure armed help from that "foreign friendly anti-imperialist country". I remember Mr. Bhagat Ram telling me that in the course of his conversations with him during the escape, Netaji had made it abundantly clear that he had no reservations in his mind about the sources of help necessary to win India's war of independence. The expression Mr. Bhagat Ram used to convey Netaji's feelings in the matter was that Netaji would not hesitate to "fall at the feet of a street dog" if that would help bring India's independence nearer. This was in the context of the doubts expressed by Mr. Bhagat Ram about the propriety of seeking help from Fascist powers like Germany and Italy.

17. I submit that it might have been a battle of wits between Netaji and the Kirti Kisan Party. The Kirti Group was not at that time recognised by the C.P.S.U. (Communist Party of the Soviet Union) and as such could not claim to be the official Communist Party of India. It would therefore be very much to their advantage if they could smuggle Netaji into Russia as their representative. The weight of Netaji's personality could possibly tilt the balance in favour of the Kirti Group.

Netaji, on the other hand, might have thought it expedient to avail of the assistance of this group, which was his for the asking. In any case, one cannot believe that a pragmatist like Netaji would align himself with the Soviet Union to the exclusion of other countries likely to be interested in helping the cause of Indian independence.



# AN ASSESSMENT OF NETAJI'S POLICY OF COOPERATION WITH THE AXIS POWERS DURING WORLD WAR II\*

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Let me first of all express my appreciation of the opportunity given to me to address the International Seminar held on the occasion of the 76th birth anniversary of Subhas Chandra Bose.

For Bose the attainment of independence of India constituted an article of faith and working for its achievement the only mission of his life. These two fundamentals of his life and character inexorably led to his decision to undertake two historic and perilous journeys, first from India to Europe starting right from here in January 1941, then from Europe back to Asia in the midst of World War II which started in February 1943 from Kiel in North Germany. The memorable trip to Asia eventually ended tragically for him. But the work he carried on abroad with singular courage and confidence regardless of great risks, both his friends and foes now admit, had a notable impact on India succeeding in her struggle for independence sooner than was generally reckoned.

During his stay in Europe, Bose explained to many who came in close contact with him—and I am happy to count myself as one of them—the ultimate meaning and content of Indian independence, the plans he had made to further the great cause and also his well-considered views as to how he would proceed to solve the problems of free India.<sup>1, 2, 3.</sup>

Subhas Chandra from his very young days took a very broad view of world history and saw in Britain's domination of India, with all the signs of stability and continuity it presented, only a passing episode in the long history of India. Just

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Chairman : Dr. R. C. Majumdar

\*\* Since deceased



as a certain combination of circumstances in the past enabled Britain to gain control over India and keep her in subjection, similarly, Bose perceived, new circumstances at home and abroad would bring about the termination of Britain's overlordship of the country. In his view, two main factors would bring about the desired change in the destiny of India. First, internally, the remarkable awakening of the Indian people brought about by a long line of illustrious leaders with Gandhi having the pre-eminent position ; and, second, externally, the international situation as it developed since the first World War leading to the gradual decline of Britain as a world power. Bose counted on these two factors reaching their culmination during World War II resulting in the accomplishment of Indian independence.

Bose did not overlook the much publicised benefits brought to India in the early part of British rule of the country. He, however, was convinced that with the passage of time the faults and failures of British administration far outweighed its so-called usefulness. What is more, Bose thought, continued British domination of India stimulated serious international complications and blocked India's progress in essential directions. He also took into account India having acquired the ability to function as a free country for her own good and that of the world at large.

The carefully conceived and cleverly executed escape of Bose from India to Europe at the beginning of 1941 and his eventual trip from Europe to Asia were not acts of sudden impulse. He had noted much earlier the markedly enhanced urge in the Indian people for independence and their readiness to fight and make effective sacrifices for its realisation. He foresaw how the international situation was rapidly moving towards a major conflagration from which it would be difficult for Britain to keep out. These evaluations alone did not finally determine his step of leaving for Europe in 1941. The other factors responsible for his decision and precipitating it were : (i) his considered view that Britain would not concede India's demand for independence through negotiations ;



(ii) the apprehension that Britain would increasingly favour the mounting demands of the Muslim League in the interest of the continuance of British grip over India ; (iii) the conclusion that he had reached after a talk with Jinnah in 1940 that the Muslim League leader was bent upon partitioning the country ;<sup>4</sup> (iv) the belief that a powerful thrust from abroad would not only expedite the termination of British rule but also ward off the danger of partition ; and finally,<sup>4</sup> (v) his faith in an active response from the people of India to a call for the final battle for the country's independence. If Bose had an assurance from competent sources that Britain would show a more imaginative and constructive attitude to India's claim to independence or if he was certain that he could take the struggle for Indian independence to a more advanced and active stage by working within the country as before while the world war went on, he would not have left India at a critical moment. This we could gather from his conversations with us in Europe. These factors behind his decision to go abroad in the midst of earth-shaking events of the early forties merit careful study by all historians.

During his stay in Europe in 1941-43 Bose repeatedly underlined in his speeches and statements the basic reasons and the motivation of his trip abroad. He was apparently not unaware that his decision to leave the country and proceed to Europe would evoke criticism in many quarters. What, however, was the determining factor in his final decision to go abroad was that in his judgment it was in the national interest.<sup>5</sup> He used to state repeatedly and with great emphasis while in Europe that it was national interest alone which brought Britain into war with Germany despite the policy that Hitler followed over a long period of time with great care to avoid an armed conflict with Britain. The same factor determined Britain's active association with the Soviet Union at a later stage of the war. Time and again in history, Bose asserted, national or State interests have been given the priority in the formulation of national policy. He, at the same time, did not ignore the importance of ideology in a national movement



in accordance with the internal conditions in a country. As President of the annual session of the Indian National Congress at Haripura in February 1938, while on the one hand he pointedly referred to the signs of a serious international crisis approaching and the need to take advantage of it in the national interest, on the other hand he presented a complete plan of a socialist society to be evolved in India.<sup>6</sup>

While in Europe, Subhas Chandra Bose where he came to be called 'Netaji' by his countrymen, a designation that has stuck on, gave serious thought to the various problems which he thought free India would have to face. His analysis of these problems and the remedies he contemplated (these were of course in terms of a united India) deserve to be studied with care in India even today. I shall confine myself to a brief narration of certain main problems which were in Bose's mind and to which he directed serious and particular attention.

Bose held that the non-majority religious groups in India—not minorities in the generally accepted use of the term—called for sympathetic and generous consideration from the majority religious group. He was particularly keen on the adoption of a conciliatory attitude towards the Muslims without prejudice to progressive and vital State interests. This attitude was the result of his recognition of the reality of the threat of partition and his fervent desire to avoid such partition.<sup>1</sup>

The language question of India received his special attention.<sup>3</sup> He planned seriously in terms of India having a common national language without undue delay, a national tongue being one of the very essential bases for the satisfactory integration of India. Bose conceived of Hindustani as the national language for India, without denying in any way due scope to local or provincial languages. He was himself very proud of his mother tongue Bengali. Nevertheless, during his stay in Europe in that tumultuous period he paid great attention to improving his own proficiency in Hindustani. A bulletin was started for the Indian Legion in Europe he built up and it was published in Hindustani using the Latin script straightway. Similar bulletins and periodicals were later



published for the Indian National Army he organised in South East Asia.

Bose thought deeply of the economic development of Free India. And in Berlin he formed the nucleus of a Planning Committee. He directed this Committee to work on socialistic lines.

In the discussions which Bose used to have with his colleagues in Europe, he placed much weight on an effective defence force after independence and also on setting up a national defence industry for turning out defence equipment.<sup>8</sup> To those familiar with his ideas in this regard the importance he gave to India possessing a good navy is no secret even though this might have at the time caused some surprise. Bose took well into account the bigger role the air force and the navy would play in the defence of the country in the future. Projecting Netaji's ideas into the present, the sensational 'Blitz war' in East Bengal of 1971 would never have been possible without a strong Indian Navy, planned, built up and used according to the present geographical situation and strategic needs.

One international problem destined to become a reality much later was foreseen by Bose. Even while in Europe during the war, he occupied himself seriously with the position of Indians and people of Indian origin in Africa and especially those in South Africa. He did not think that South Africa would emerge out of the war in a weakened state or that the leaders who would come on top in South Africa would favour the continued stay of Indians in that country. He foresaw 'Apartheid'. He talked about the possibility of moving Indians in South Africa to other regions in Africa where they had better chances to live and work. He also considered the possibility of India, with her expanded economy after independence, absorbing a good number of Indians from Africa. Although his views on the subject were not of immediate relevance, the fact that he was earnestly thinking about it indicated an alertness of mind that would grapple with all possible contingencies and leave nothing to chance.

Did Subhas Chandra Bose miscalculate in resolving to leave



for Europe early in 1941? This is a question that has been raised again and again. But today many will grant that he was not wrong in thinking that increased pressure on Britain was essential to compel London take a more reasonable and rational attitude and that his activities abroad provided the additional pressure on Britain in relation to the Indian independence movement. It is important to record in this connection and of this I can assure you fully, that while abroad in Germany as well as in Japan Bose did not look upon himself as an exile. He considered himself as remaining intimately bound with the Indian National Congress and his role abroad to be complementary to the movement led by the Congress inside India. He also had in mind the possibility, under certain conditions, of proving useful to Indian leaders like Gandhi and Nehru in eventual negotiations with Britain.

Bose undoubtedly concentrated on his all-out campaign against Britain, not because he thought Britain was responsible for all the troubles of the world, but only since Britain dominated India. This sustained domination of India by Britain, in his view, stood not only against vital Indian interests and legitimate claims but also in the bargain created a restiveness and tension in India and over a wide area of the world. His concentration on the struggle against Britain did not render him blind to the features of Britain which made it possible for her to gain a place of prominence among the nations of the world and maintaining a position of importance. Bose had in mind a satisfactory adjustment of relations between Britain and India on the latter gaining independence. This, in his view, would involve very careful work and possibly take longer to achieve than an adjustment of free India's relations with some other countries, because certain sentiments and relics of a bitter past relating to British rule had to be overcome in the process.

Bose took into account the growing strength of the United States of America in his reflections relating to the future of Free India. He did not fail to take cognizance of the positive attitude of Roosevelt towards the Indian independence



movement as against the rigid oppositional one displayed by Churchill. Bose instituted a special weekly broadcast of the Free India Centre in Berlin directed to the United States of America.

Bose paid particular attention to the maintenance and development of good relations of India with the Soviet Union and China even though he was living in Germany and in Japan during the war period. The continued armed conflict between China and Japan was a source of disappointment to him. The fact is not widely known that while in Germany he discreetly explored the possibility of getting this conflict checked. On one occasion he discussed the topic with General von Falkenhausen, Supreme Commander of the German Forces in Belgium, who, announced to Bose with astonishing frankness "my sympathies are all on the other side", meaning China. Bose, however, knew that he had to be very cautious in handling this problem and his efforts did not lead to anything concrete. Bose saw in the preservation and promotion of good relations by India with Germany and Japan the prospect of using them in the future for the expansion of India's economy and thus of positive advantage to India.

In one respect Bose's expectation went wrong. This happened when Germany turned to attack the Soviet Union. This development caused him deep regret and upset his plans. We must not forget that when Bose went to Germany in 1941 there seems to have been good understanding between Germany and Soviet Russia. If a state of war had existed between Germany and Russia in the spring of 1941, I am sure he would not have gone to Germany. He might have taken a decision to go to Russia, if possible. The well-known German writer and publicist Dr. Giseler Wirsing who met Bose soon after the German attack on the Soviet Union has quoted Bose in his latest book as having reacted on the development with a shake of his head : "This cannot turn out to be good". Wirsing adds and I agree with him : "In Bose's world concept the advance of the Soviet Union had an important place. He did not in this matter differ from Nehru. Bose believed that Russia needed



not only a technical, but also a metaphysical complement which could well come from Germany". I think that you in India today are in a very similar position vis-a-vis Russia. You are not only a political but also a metaphysical complement of Russia. Wirsing further observed : "The German attack on the Soviet Union influenced Bose's decision to depart for East Asia. About Hitler he talked with much bitterness".

An objective historical assessment of Netaji's policy of co-operation with Axis powers during World War II leads us inevitably to the following conclusion :

Regardless of the fact that he was operating in Axis countries in 1941-1945, Subhas Chandra Bose remained an uncompromising fighter for Indian independence, made a very significant contribution to Indian independence and—what is more—he continued to be a planner and builder of the Free India of his dreams. The Axis Powers lost the war. But Subhas Chandra Bose won in the victory of India over Britain and his ideas of national reconstruction will win many more victories in the days to come.



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The interview, in part reads :—

“At our first conversation (in Paris in 1941), he gave me a detailed account of the reasons which influenced his decision to leave India and come over to Europe during the war period. These were the reasons he gave me :

His presidentship of the Congress had convinced him that the masses in India were in a mood to respond to an active call for independence. He felt and also regretted that this call might not be coming from the Congress leadership who were likely to devote their time on resolutions, petitions and hopeful thoughts of Britain being more conciliatory than she actually was at that moment. That was one of the main reasons that influenced him to come over to Europe. Of course he also thought that the possibilities for him in India were limited whereas there was scope for active work abroad. The second reason was that in 1914 when the first world war broke out, the British said that no Indian leader who had his roots in the country—not people who had been living abroad as exiles—had raised the banner of revolt for the independence of India. This he thought, should not happen again and greatly influenced him to come over to Europe. The third reason was that he thought that Britain's position in any way would be weakened as a result of the war and that would give an opportunity for negotiating for better terms for the independence of India. And, to create such terms, work abroad would be very useful and very effective. By work he especially meant propaganda not only in Europe but also in America and in Ireland.

Another reason and a very important reason which struck me very much, because I had not thought of a possibility in this direction, was that he told me that his last conversation with Jinnah had convinced him that he was out for the partition of India. The only possible way of stopping it was an active movement from abroad being carried on into India. The people from India, both the Hindus and the Muslims would respond to such a call. That



was an important reason that influenced him to come over to Europe.

It is interesting that in the Legion the extraordinary interest he took in the communal differences not coming to the foreground—amongst the Sikhs themselves, between the Muslims and the Hindus or the Muslims and the Sikhs. He was particularly careful in seeing that the Muslims were looked after most carefully and even tenderly. He always took up the attitude that a minority must be looked after with special care.”

5. Azad Hind, Free India Centre, Berlin, Ed. K. A. Bhatta, No. 5/6, 1942, p. 7.

Relevant extract from Netaji's broadcast from Berlin is quoted below :

“In this fateful hour in India's history, it would be a grievous mistake to be carried away by ideological considerations alone. The internal politics of Germany or Italy or Japan do not concern us—they are the concern of the people of those countries. But even a child should understand that whatever the internal politics of the Tripartite Powers may be, their role in the international sphere is the destruction of the British Empire—which is India's one and only enemy. Do we not see with our own eyes how, regardless of ideological considerations, the British Empire is now co-operating with Soviet Russia? It is high time that my friends and colleagues at home learnt to differentiate between the internal and external policy of Free India. The internal policy of Free India is, and should be, the concern of the Indian people themselves—while the external policy should be one of collaboration with the enemies of Britain. While standing for full collaboration with the Tripartite Powers in the external sphere—I stand for absolute self-determination for India where her national affairs are concerned and I shall never tolerate any interference in the internal policy of the Free Indian State. So far as socio-economic problems are concerned, my views are exactly what they were when I was at home—and no one should make the mistake of concluding that external collaboration with the Tripartite Powers means acceptance of their domination or even of their ideology in our internal affairs.”

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### Discussion

*Mr. S. K. Chakraborty :* The paper needs one important addition. Netaji's activities during world war II not only made a significant contribution towards the attainment of India's freedom but also promoted the liberation movements of other colonial countries of Asia. The Azad Hind Fauj provided an example that other subject countries could follow in their struggle for freedom. Netaji's movement was also in line with the concept of an Asiatic Federation preached by Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das.

*Mr. Samar Guha :* Netaji's policy of cooperation with the Axis Powers during World War II was neither based on purely pragmatic considerations nor was it one of adventure. In his presidential address to the Haripura Congress in 1938, when he outlined the foreign policy of subject India, Netaji stated categorically that our foreign policy must under no circumstances be related to the internal politics and the form of state organisation of other countries. Secondly, his strategy of cooperation with the Axis powers was also in keeping with his political philosophy. Netaji did not believe in any monistic school of philosophy. Therefore, he was neither a negativist nor an absolutist in his attitude towards the political ideologies in vogue. He did not consider any political ideology, viz, Communism, Fascism or any other to be based on absolute truth or absolute untruth. From these two points of view, he considered it eminently proper to take advantage of the international situation and cooperate with any State, whatever may be its ideological content, to advance the cause of India's freedom.

We know that Netaji tried to contact Soviet Russia before leaving India, seeking armed intervention of the Soviets in support of India's national revolution. Failing to get any response, he tried other means.

When he formed the Free India Legion in Europe, he made it absolutely clear that the Legion would not be allowed under any circumstances to fight against any country other than the British. In all the broadcasts he made from Europe, the only target of attack was British Imperialism. When Germany declared war on Soviet Russia, he did not follow suit but took an independent line. He was obliged to declare war on the U.S.A, because of the involvement of U.S. forces with the British forces on the soil of India against the advance of the Indian National Army.

*Mr. Ranjan Borra :* Twentyfive years have passed already since Netaji's collaboration with the Axis powers. Now, most of the speakers today as well as Dr. Werth himself brought out very important points of friction with the Axis which Netaji had to encounter during his stay in Germany and in Japan. Confining myself to Germany I want to bring



out the fact that we possess documents and documentary evidence to show that National Socialist Germany rendered real help to Netaji. It is in the historical perspective that we should recognise this fact while criticising what National Socialist Germany did not do for Netaji and the Azad Hind Government. I bring this 'out only to restore the perspective. We should not be onesided in our assessment of Netaji's collaboration with the Axis powers.



**INDIA'S INDEPENDENCE AND THE AXIS POWERS : \***  
**SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE IN EUROPE DURING THE STRATEGIC**  
**INITIATIVE OF THE AXIS POWERS, 1941-1942**

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**I. INTRODUCTION**

At the outset of this investigation into India's chances of achieving independence with the support of the Axis Powers lie certain assumptions which need to be specified. The first question which must be answered can be formulated as follows : Did an Indian independence movement organized abroad have any chance at all to find support among Britain's potential enemies ? To answer this vast and difficult question one must analyse policies and strategies of the anti-British powers concerned. How consistently did they pursue this main hypothetical objective—the disintegration of the British Empire and how much attention did they pay to the question of Indian independence ? The second important question involves an examination of the optimum course of political strategy and tactics, including the effective use of propaganda, drawn up by Indians themselves with the purpose of coordinating their aims with the political and military actions of Britain's enemies.

Let us first approach the problem from the most obvious hypothetical assumption—a potential ideological alliance between the anti-British powers. If this essential premise could have been fulfilled, there would no reason to doubt that a concerted military action aimed at the disruption of the British Empire might have come into existence, following in the wake of Germany's initial astonishing blitz victories. And indeed, all the powers concerned, Soviet Russia, Italy and Japan, took steps, in their prospective zones of territorial expansion, to

\* Paper presented at Netaji Bhawan, Calcutta, on 25 January 1973  
Chairman : Dr. Alexander Werth



exploit, though on a limited scale, German military victories in Europe. But it soon became apparent that the revisionist powers, far from considering a largescale military cooperation, showed very little genuine concern for an ideological alliance, and that the potentially strong anti-colonial feelings against the Western powers, which had accumulated in the vast area between the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean in particular, was allowed to evaporate. Moreover, as events would show, it was the military considerations which, right from the beginning, exclusively claimed the highest priority in the minds of the Axis decision-makers. The need for political propaganda on the part of the Axis Powers was therefore subordinated, as soon as the war reached its full height, to the military criteria.

It seems therefore self-evident that any determined nationalist leader, of howsoever independant outlook, who came to seek assistance from the Axis Powers, would have to adjust his original plans and ideas to the immediate military objectives of the Axis Powers, and thus to subordinate his country's supreme *raison d'être*—that is the will to achieve independence—to the tactical requirements dictated by their *raison d'état*. These, then, were the objective limitations for the activities of any nationalist leader who decided to throw in his lot with the Axis Powers in the belief that the collapse of the hitherto existing colonial order could be accelerated through his own active contribution. Let us try to examine how successful or unsuccessful Subhas Chandra Bose was in solving this dilemma.

Two essential preconditions have to be emphasized in order that the aims of Axis Powers and the radical programme of achieving Indian independence, as elaborated by Bose, could have worked together. It was vital that military plans, as conceived by Axis strategic planners, should give due importance to anti-colonial uprisings ; and secondly that, India should not have been considered in isolation but only as part of a wider scheme of instigating anti-colonial guerrilla movements in the Middle East and the whole of Asia.



The proposed investigation will follow the three major stages of the initial period of the Second World War, 1939-1942, during which India might have become the topical question for the Axis leaders :

(a) The first stage from the outbreak of the war in Europe until the spring of 1941, when speculations were being made about the Continental Bloc and the extension of the Tripartite Pact to eventually include the Soviet Union. Due to the improvised character of the war in Europe at this stage, Hitler was compelled to take many unforeseen steps which led him to accept several interim operational solutions. This brought the German forces into the Eastern Mediterranean. At this time a feasible opportunity arose to encourage an Arab upheaval in the Middle East which might have been synchronized with Axis strategic plans in this area.

(b) The second stage initiated by German onslaught on the Soviet Union and culminating in the outbreak of the war in the Pacific. At that time a rapid collapse of Russia was expected within three months and Germany's 'post-BARBAROSSA' planning envisaged offensive thrusts in the direction of the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, and if possible, to the north-west frontier of India. A number of attempts were made during this period to persuade the yet uncommitted Japanese ally to launch a direct attack from the opposite direction against British outposts in South-East Asia.

(c) The third stage, which opened with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941 and lasted throughout the year 1942, when prospects of a joint Axis offensive towards India from both the East and the West became real.

The scope of our investigation does not go beyond 1942. Because, from the standpoint of military operations—to which political propaganda concerning Indian independence was strictly subordinated—it was during the second half of 1942 that the strategic initiative of the Axis faded away as the tide of war began to turn against Germany and Japan. Had events taken a different course during any of these periods, India could conceivably have become a battleground. The British



Raj would thus have been threatened to such an extent that had a nationalist insurrection been timed to explode simultaneously with the Axis advance, Britain might have been forced to retreat from her Indian domain with serious repercussions for the Allied cause.

## II. S. C. BOSE'S ESCAPE TO EUROPE AND THE NAZI IMAGE OF INDIA

It is unnecessary for the purposes of this paper to give a detailed account of how Subhas Chandra Bose reached his fateful decision to escape from India and to organize the revolutionary movement for Indian independence abroad. It will suffice to enumerate the steps leading to the decisive turning point in his political career.

The year 1939 saw Bose steadily losing his ground in the Indian political arena, except perhaps in Bengal. It all began when he failed to preserve his position as the Congress Party President after his re-election at Tripuri in March 1939. In his memoirs Bose claims that his political defeat was caused not only by Gandhi's hostility to the continuation of his presidency but also by the absence of a concerted and united left-wing strategy within and without the Congress<sup>1</sup>. In May 1939 he therefore tried to form a radical left-wing grouping, the "Forward Bloc", and the "Left-Consolidation Committee" a month later. But the latter disintegrated within less than a year, after being deserted first by the Royists, then the Trade Unionists, the Congress Socialists and the Communists. This alone must have been a frustrating experience for Bose, for it occurred at a time when international developments, in accordance with his amazingly correct forecast, seemed to indicate that conditions for India were most propitious to launch a 'direct action' to overthrow the Raj.

The central issue to which Bose clung with all his heart was his prophetic expectation of a major international crisis as a result of which Britain and her Empire would be weakened if not entirely defeated and which would thus give India a unique opportunity for achieving her independence. While



Gandhi and Nehru wished to preserve the unity of the Congress movement at any cost, and refused to alter their policy in spite of the approaching war, Bose, on the other hand, wanted to split up the Party and let its dynamic section take over the leadership which might, according to his own words, 'one day move the Gandhi Wing and the entire Congress to militant action'.<sup>2</sup> His idea of the revolutionary struggle against the Raj was in many ways close to that of the Bolsheviks of 1917 or of the Irish Sinn Fein rebels. It was to be carried out as 'direct action'.<sup>3</sup> When in September 1939 Britain finally became involved in a war with Germany, Bose could declare to his great satisfaction and relief: "The much expected crisis had at last come. This was India's golden opportunity".<sup>4</sup>

Having been enormously impressed by Germany's military success, Bose made no secret that his most cherished wish was to see Britain defeated. He foresaw the build-up of a big power alliance directed against the British Empire, as he argues in his editorial article 'After Paris' published in the *Forward Bloc* on 15/6/40, 'since both Germany and Italy—and perhaps Soviet Russia—now regard Great Britain as public enemy No. 1, it is also likely that they have a plan of carving up the British Empire. In this task they may invite Japanese help and co-operation...'.<sup>5</sup> He also predicted the future division of spheres of interest among them. His political foresight told him—as it would emerge six months later in the discussions between Molotov and Ribbentrop in Berlin—that Germany and Russia would have conflicting interests in the Balkans and that the latter would be persuaded to exploit the Middle East. He remained nevertheless convinced that the colonies would be in a position to gain from the downfall of the British Empire, and sardonically made the point, perhaps unconsciously imitating Churchill's famous war speech, that 'if the Allies lose their foothold in Europe, they may conceivably fight in Africa, in Asia, even in America, but it is for the ultimate aim of victory, useless... It was the fundamental weakness of a system in which slavery and freedom existed side by side that had resulted in Britain being "decisively beaten" on the



propaganda front ..'. 'Some of our friends', he added, 'have been possessed with the dream of India being converted into a bastion of democratic resistance against the dictators' hordes. What a grotesque picture !' (The Nagpur Address of 18/6/40, delivered at the All-India Forward Bloc Conference).<sup>6</sup>

There could be no doubt that it was precisely this calculation that Britain was going to be defeated by the envisaged Four-Power Bloc, that the Empire was bound to break up, and that the struggle for India's independence would have to be assisted by the anti-British powers were it to succeed during the war, these were the crucial factors that led to Bose's final decision to escape from India. His second motivation already indicated earlier, but nonetheless a strong one, was also the fact that in spite of his correct assessment of the early stage of the oncoming war in Europe, the inevitable disintegration of his own movement in India itself meant that he became a general without an army. Finally, his political isolation was made complete by his arrest on 2 July 1940.

The circumstances of Bose's escape from his confinement in Calcutta to Kabul, and then to Moscow and Berlin, have been abundantly described elsewhere<sup>7</sup>. I would like to confine myself to the perhaps the most interesting aspect of this escape which emerges from the shadow game of diplomacy. It concerns the ambiguous attitude of the Soviet authorities towards Bose's attempts to approach them and then the fact that he was not offered asylum in Moscow—a big disappointment to him, since Bose considered Russia, for a number of reasons, to be the ideal base for his propaganda work vis-a-vis India, provided of course the Soviet authorities cooperated. But this is difficult, as in many other cases, to assess without directly consulting Soviet government archives.

The underlying thought for the following investigation into the period covering Bose's activities in Germany, may well be epitomized by a quotation from a report written by Signor Quaroni, the Italian Ambassador in Kabul, which sums up the conversation he held with Bose in March 1941 :



"If in June 1940, that is at the time when defeat of England seemed certain, we had a ready organization like the one Bose proposes now, it could have been attempted to liberate India, and it might have been possible. Politically and militarily India is the corner-stone of the British Empire. Last year's chance is gone, but a similar one could come this year also : one should be ready to take full advantage of it... Our enemies, in all their wars, the present one included, have always largely used the 'revolution' weapon with success ; Why should we not learn from our enemies ? Two things are necessary to make revolutions : men and money. We do not have the men to start a revolution in India, but luck has put them in our hands ; no matter how difficult Germany's and our monetary situation is, the money that the movement requires is certainly not lacking. It is only a question of valuing the pros and cons and to decide on the risk"<sup>8</sup>.

Although the Italians were much more cooperative than the Germans when Bose appeared in Kabul, and even earlier during his visits to Europe before the war, he nevertheless decided that Berlin would be a much more appropriate place, in view of Germany's military significance, for organizing Indian political propaganda. It is therefore important, before we start discussing Bose's war-time activities in Berlin, to make a necessary digression, in order to find a satisfactory answer, if any, to Bose's own attitude to the Nazi racial philosophy, and to Hitler's programme of world conquest. We shall start with a tentative reconstruction of Hitler's views on India and her struggle for emancipation. Because, after all, how can we ignore the views of that man who imposed his sinister vision on the fate of Germany and Europe and in whose vicinity Bose spent almost two years, although he was to meet him only once ?

Attentive readers of *Mein Kampf* can discover three basic aspects of Hitler's approach to India, to which he would frequently return in his later statements. It was in this book that Hitler made the ominous revelations, so easily overlooked by his contemporaries, of his future intention to re-shape Germany racially, and eventually the whole globe, and which were to remain unmodified until the end of his life. The first aspect which strikes us is Hitler's peremptory contempt for anti-colonial movements in general, and for those forms of



non-violent resistance as conducted in India at that time under Gandhi's leadership in particular. Similarly, Hitler always strongly resisted attempts such as those demonstrated by the leftist Nazis (viz., the Strasser brothers, Count Reventlow, the young Goebbels) to associate the Nazi movement with organizations like the "League of Oppressed Nations" and the "League Against Imperialism" (founded by V. N. Chattopadhyaya—one of the Indian nationalists used by the Germans for anti-British activities during the war years 1915-18). As soon as Hitler came to power in 1933, these organisations were suspended, along with the "Indian Information Bureau", established in Berlin in 1929 on Jawaharlal Nehru's advice and headed by A.C.N. Nambiar, who was ordered to leave Germany in March 1933. Ironically enough, Nambiar was to be chosen by Bose himself later during the war, first to become his deputy in charge of Indian propaganda and then his successor as the head of the Free India Centre in Berlin. It is worth citing, at this juncture, what Hitler thought of those 'Asiatic jugglers', as he used to call the 'fighters for Indian freedom' :

"It just happens to be impossible to overwhelm with a coalition of cripples a powerful state that is determined to stake, if necessary, its last drop of blood for its existence. As a folkish man, who appraises the value of men on a racial basis, I am prevented by mere knowledge of the racial inferiority of these so called 'oppressed nations' from linking the destiny of my own people with theirs."<sup>9</sup>

The second aspect of Hitler's attitude to India was largely determined by his pragmatic calculations in the field of colonial and foreign policy. Although he admired the way in which the British dominated and administered India, and said that he 'as a man of Germanic blood, would, in spite of everything, rather see India under British rule than under any other'<sup>10</sup> he could not stop Britain becoming Germany's adversary in her pursuit to achieve a hegemony over Europe. This fact forced him to be all the more pragmatic as he began to realize that he would have to offer Japan and Russia a free hand in India in exchange for an alliance against the British Empire—at least during the initial period of his blitz assaults.



These two aspects of Hitler's approach to India can be found both incorporated in a third aspect which includes the basic axioms of his prophetic vision of the future 'world dominion' (Weltherrschaft). His final aims, to which he clung with remarkable consistency even in matters of detail, can be surmised from his intimate testimonies like the so-called Hitler's Second Book, found in 1958 and published three years afterwards, or *Hitler's Table Talk*. India emerges on Hitler's visionary screen in a certain sequence of fixed images. One of them is his conviction that India had to remain under the white man's domination, and he therefore addressed a plain warning to Britain that she would lose India 'either if her own administrative machinery falls a prey to racial decomposition (which at the moment is completely out of the question in India) or she is worsted by the sword of a powerful enemy'. 'Indian agitators, however', he added, 'will never achieve this'.<sup>11</sup> It was communist Russia that Hitler feared might replace the racially exemplary British rule over India. He therefore disliked the idea of destroying the Raj, and Russia or Japan filling the vacuum. But he could hardly decide which of these two alternatives was worse. On the one hand, a Russian occupation, more likely in the years preceding the war, would bring communism, and Hitler believed that India would be most receptive to it. On the other hand, he feared equally that a Japanese rule would establish in India the supremacy of the 'yellow man'.

Hitler did not, however, at any stage consider replacing the British presence in India by a German one, even at the peak of his military success, when further penetration of German troops into the Middle East on the route to India seemed to be a distinct possibility. German personnel for colonial administration, it should be recalled, were trained only for Africa. Why did he, then, we may ask, order on 17th February 1941, the OKW Operations Staff to prepare a study for an advance from Afghanistan into India, following the successful completion of BARBAROSSA? The answer lies not only in the gross overestimation of German military triumph and



in Hitler's obstinate bias towards the continental strategy as opposed to the maritime one in disregard of the obvious logistic difficulties. It also lies in his irrational and unshakable belief that India was to be viewed as the magic centre of the largest empire the world had ever seen and as the inexorable source of Britain's wealth and power. Perhaps Hitler felt that a sweeping campaign by his mechanized divisions towards the Indian border thousands of miles away from the supply bases, disposing of Russia *en passant*, would be the best way to force Britain to accept his peace terms—if the repeated attempts of German armour to cross the mere twenty miles of water between Calais and Dover should again fail. Even if the hypothetical Anglo-German arrangement had become a reality, Hitler would most certainly still have left India in Britain's grip, because of his great respect for the Raj which led him to believe the Germans could do no better. (It is my own belief that at the time of Bose's arrival in Berlin in the spring of 1941 he was still unaware of the ominous consequences of Hitler's attitude towards India as well as his ambivalent relationship to Britain and her Empire. The process of realization was a gradual one. If Bose had presumed that Britain was also public enemy No. 1 for Hitler, he was to see, before long, how fateful and irretrievable a mistake he made.) In this respect the Nazi racial dogma exercised a far more decisive influence upon Hitler's mind than any pragmatic political considerations. Thus, as long as the British preserved their racial superiority and ruled their Empire with firm determination, Hitler identified himself with the white man's lot and was willing to cooperate with them. He continued to believe that the 'loss of India by the British Empire would be a misfortune for the rest of the world, including Germany itself'.<sup>12</sup> In addition, this explains why Hitler did not exclude even the possibility of assisting the British in their defence of India against the 'Yellow Peril', as Ulrich von Hassell for instance reveals in his diaries, written after the Japanese conquered Singapore: "It is said that Hitler himself is not entirely enthusiastic over the gigantic successes of the Japanese, and has said he would



gladly send the English twenty divisions to help throw back the yellow men"<sup>13</sup>.

Furthermore, it was necessary for Hitler to have a historical analogy for his design of Germany's future living space in the East. This analogy was India. Whenever he spoke of her, he turned his gaze on Russia and attempted to draw such over-simplified parallels as the following :

"What India was for England, the territories of Russia will be for us.

"Our role in Russia will be analogous to that of England in India ..The Russian space is our India. Like the English, we shall rule this empire with a handful of men ..", and so forth.<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, Hitler's arguments in favour of the German conquest of the Eastern *Lebensraum* were magnificently justified by the beneficial influence of the Raj in his eyes on the character of the British themselves. He was deeply impressed both by their administrative efficiency and their racial arrogance and came to the conclusion that India was to be regarded as the true source of British national pride. It was this sentiment of 'Nordic solidarity', which one might call 'racial internationalism', that bound Hitler in spirit to the English 'super-race'.

Later he came to bitterly regret his war-time mistake of not exploiting the potential anti-colonial feelings among the non-European races. Here are a few of Hitler's untypical revelations noted down by his secretary Martin Bormann in February 1945, when his master, by now permanently under the influence of drugs, awaited either his death or a miracle in the bunker beneath the Reichschancellery :

"Our obvious course should have been to liberate the working classes and to help the workers of France to implement their own revolution. We should have brushed aside, rudely and without pity, the fossilized bourgeoisie... We were equally stupid as regards the French colonies. That, too, was the work of our great minds in the Wilhelmstrasse ! (German Foreign Ministry) Diplomats of the old, classic mould, soldiers of a bygone regime, petty country squires—of such were those who were to help us to revolutionize all Europe ! And they have led us into waging wars as they would have waged it in the nineteenth century. Never, at any price, should we have put our money on France and



against the peoples subjected to her yoke. On the contrary, we should have helped them to achieve their liberty and, if necessary, should have goaded them into doing so. There was nothing to stop us in 1940 from making a gesture of this sort in the Near East and in North Africa...All Islam vibrated at the news of our victories. The Egyptians, the Iraqis and the whole of the Near East were all ready to rise in revolt. Just think what we could have done to help them, even to incite them, as would have been both our duty and in our interest ! ...We had a great chance of pursuing a splendid policy with regard to Islam. But we missed the bus, as we missed it on several other occasions, thanks to our loyalty to the Italian alliance ! In this theatre of operations, then, the Italians prevented us from playing our best card, the emancipation of the French subjects and the raising of the standard of revolt in the countries oppressed by the British...And since all these territories are now occupied by the Anglo-Americans, I am more than justified in saying that this policy of ours was a disaster. Further, this futile policy has allowed those hypocrites, the British, to pose, if you please, as liberators in Syria...<sup>16</sup>.

Whether Hitler's belated lamentation could seriously be considered as a precedent valid also for India, remains pure speculation. What matters is that during the decisive stages of the war Hitler would never go beyond symbolic assistance to the Islamic and Indian peoples, and would always insist on the priority of his military strategy and his wishful political dreams as regards a compromise peace with Britain over the aspirations of the non-European nations.

We have already mentioned S.C. Bose's assessment of the international situation and the conclusions drawn by him for leaving India and working for Indian independence among Britain's enemies. It remains for me to discuss Bose's attitude to Nazism and Hitler himself. Hira Lal Seth in his book entitled *Is He a Fascist ?*, maintains that Bose, after he returned to India from Europe, remained anti-Hitlerite and continued to preach socialism, and that it was only after Tripuri that he reverted to his old praise for the Axis. Without going into the semantic nuances of the term 'Fascism', one has to reject the too simplistic adoption of the European terminology for Asian countries. During his stay in Europe in 1933-36, Bose frequently visited Germany and made several vain attempts to contact



leading figures of the Nazi hierarchy. Although he had met Mussolini as early as 1934, none of the Nazi leaders, except perhaps Rosenberg, would agree to see him. Instead, the Nazi leaders preferred to meet influential British politicians, journalists, or, in exceptional cases, those Indians who appeared to be reliable pillars of the Empire, like the Aga Khan. Cases of racial maltreatment of Indian students in Germany and Goering's vociferous attacks on Gandhi (as they appeared for instance in *The Daily Mail* of 20/2/34) shocked Bose profoundly. And he therefore requested from the German authorities an official clarification of their attitude towards India in a letter of 5 April 1934. In another letter, addressed in December 1937 to the German Foreign Ministry, he listed seven demands, the first two of which stipulated that 'there should be an apology for Herr Hitler's recent attack on India and General Goering's previous attack on Mahatma Gandhi', and that 'hostile statements about India in Rosenberg's book the *Mythos of the Twentieth Century* should be withdrawn'.

Enough has been written and said about Bose's political evolution within the Congress movement, his rejection of the Gandhian satyagraha, and his unsuccessful attempt to introduce in Indian politics his own synthesis of the contrasting doctrines of communism and fascism which he himself called *Samyavada*. As far as his relationship to Nazism was concerned, it is worth noting that we do not find in Bose's statements unambiguous condemnation of Nazi aggressions in Europe, as it was frequently formulated in official Congress declarations of that time. Nor would he second the Congress motion in support of European Jews seeking asylum in India, despite his repeated criticism of the Nazi racist attitude towards the Asians (see Nehru's bitter disappointment in his letter to Bose of 3/4/39)<sup>16</sup>. And although Bose's detestation of the 'racial arrogance of the new nationalism in Germany' was certainly genuine—as he wrote in the oft-quoted letter to Dr. Thierfelder on 25 March 1936 upon his departure from Bad Gastein to India<sup>17</sup>, Bose was compelled to be much more pragmatic in his estimation of Germany's role in international



affairs, especially as he began to foresee that Germany would become Britain's most dangerous enemy. His ambivalent attitude to Nazi Germany was clearly demonstrated during the first secret meeting between himself, then President of the Congress, and the two Nazis, representing the Foreign Organizations of the NSDAP, in Bombay on 22 December 1938. Apart from Bose's violent complaints about the notorious racist attacks made by the Nazis on Indians, he asked the two Germans 'point-blank' whether the Third Reich had the intention of holding up the 'ageing and tired Empire' in the event of its disintegration. Of course, he could not have been given an authoritative reply, but a detailed despatch of the conversation had been sent to Berlin where it was received, surprisingly enough, without noticeable interest.

In the light of Bose's writings and other published and unpublished sources the picture of Bose which emerges is certainly not that of a pro-fascist sympathizer, though it is not entirely free from a strong affinity with the authoritarian and militaristic order which always evoked his admiration. In an editorial for the *Forward Bloc*, published on 13 March 1940, Bose wrote :

"Germany may be Fascist or an Imperialist, ruthless or cruel, but one cannot help admiring these qualities of hers—how she plans in advance, prepares accordingly, works according to a time-table and strikes with lightening speed."

And then he asks almost innocently : "Could not these qualities be utilized for promoting a nobler cause ?"<sup>18</sup>

In addition, Bose's calculations were unmistakably tinged with opportunism, for he saw in the Nazi-Soviet Pact the verdict announcing Britain's defeat and India's freedom. Furthermore, unlike Gandhi who wrote personal letters to Hitler in naive attempts to stop the war, Bose anticipated the war with optimism. More than anything else, it was his hatred of the British colonial presence in India which he regarded as a foreign occupation, that led him to go to the extent of suppressing his genuine aversion to the Nazi racial policy.

As for Bose's attitude to Japan, it was less ambiguous,



mainly because of Japanese aggression in China, condemned during Bose's presidentship through strongly worded Congress declarations of solidarity with the Chinese people. Bose's disapproval of Japanese aggression in China was at that time indisputable as can be illustrated by his article entitled 'Japan's Role in the Far East'.<sup>19</sup> Thus, he did not consider making Tokyo his headquarters at the outset of the European war.

### III. THE BEGINNINGS OF THE FREE INDIA MOVEMENT IN AXIS EUROPE BEFORE THE GERMAN ATTACK ON SOVIET RUSSIA

We shall now follow S. C. Bose and his work for India's independence in wartime Europe in relation to the three chronological stages of the initial period of the war ; that is to say, until the German attack on Russia, then from June 1941 up to the outbreak of the war in the Far East, and finally throughout the year 1942.

Immediately after his arrival in Berlin on 2 April 1941, Orlando Mazzotta, (the name by which Bose was officially known according to his Italian passport), set himself to work. German Foreign Ministry documents tell us about the scope and speed of his bustling activities : his first memorandum to the German Government was presented as early as 9 April ;<sup>20</sup> his second one, written under the direct impact of the anti-British revolt in Iraq, on 3 May.<sup>21</sup> On 29 April he met the German Foreign Minister Ribbentrop and heard from him the standard reply, which he was to hear during his two years in Berlin without modification, namely that the proper time for German acceptance of Bose's plan of coordinating an open revolt in India with an Axis military assault had not yet come. In June Bose visited Rome hoping that the Italians would be more forthcoming to issue a declaration on India, but he was to find the Italians equally reserved.

During the first weeks of his stay in Europe Bose formulated, in a nutshell, the basic demands whose acceptance by the Axis he regarded as essential for India's achieving independence with their assistance :



—A public declaration guaranteeing an Independent India by the Axis powers in the event of their victory.

—The Axis Powers to concentrate militarily on 'attacking the heart of the British Empire...India'.

—To organize revolts against the British through propaganda, subversive activities, or direct military assistance.

—To provide the widest possible international support by linking up the Indian cause with that of the Arabs (by avoiding, at the same time, discussion of the hazardous issue of Pakistan).

—To maintain friendly relations with the Soviet Union and Turkey which might help to create 'a long chain of friendly pro-German countries beginning from North Africa on the one side and right up to Japan in the Far East'.

—To set up a "Free Indian Government" in Europe together with a nucleus of an Indian military unit (the future Indian Legion).

—To organize clandestine activities in India by spreading propaganda through radio broadcasts and leaflets, carrying out sabotage actions and strikes and undermining the morale of the Indian soldiers.

—The important prerequisite for this was to enable Axis agents to work in the Tribal Territory and to establish in Afghanistan (Kabul) a centre for maintaining communications between Europe and India.

As far as the final point was concerned, Germany, ever since the First World War, had tried to use Afghanistan as the most forward bridgehead in order to threaten British India. Already during November/December 1939 Berlin seriously considered, in cooperation with Moscow, to restore to power the Afghan ex-King Amanullah and utilizing the warrior tribes on India's North-West Frontier. Both the Wehrmacht and Wilhelmstrasse (German Foreign Ministry) speculated that this move would also encourage the Soviets to advance in the direction of the Persian Gulf. In the OKW Operation Staff memorandum of 6 January 1940 we read that 'an operation against India', carried out by Soviet troops, was regarded



as desirable in Germany's interest because it would 'create a trouble spot threatening England and hindering the departure of English troops for Europe'. Encouraged by the spectacular German victories in Europe in June 1940, the Afghan Minister of Commerce Abdul Majid Khan made a semi-official offer of partnership to Germany. But the German Government was unwilling to commit itself once and for all to the support of Afghanistan's expansionist plans against British India. Moreover, it looked as if Germany was uninterested, to say the least, in openly showing her desire to win the support of other nations, who were traditionally antagonized by Western colonial powers and felt that their hour of revenge was at hand. Inasmuch as Germany had aspirations for a 'New Order', she failed remarkably to clarify her future policies towards non-European nations, especially those in the Islamic world where sympathizers with the Axis were in a position to influence their governmental policies. The only field of activity in which various policy-making bodies of the Axis seemed to agree on Afghanistan, was their support of disruptive actions directed against India. So, for example, the Faqir of Ipi, who had harassed the British forces in Waziristan since 1936, received regular supplies of money from Berlin and Rome. For the same reason Kabul was to be preserved as the most important communication and spy centre for Central Asia and India. Bose's chief liaison man for contacts between the Axis diplomatic missions in Kabul and the Forward Bloc organization in India was Bhagat Ram Talwar (alias "Rahmat Khan"), who had also acted as escort to S. C. Bose during his escape from India. The reliability of information coming out of India through these channels, however, remains questionable, due to the considerable delay in time and other factors. Indian propaganda in Germany relied much more on information supplied, contradictory as it may sound, by British and loyal Indian sources.

In connection with future German plans scheduled for the post-BARBAROSSA phase, that is to say, at the earliest from the autumn 1941 onwards when the destruction of the Red



Army would be achieved, the OKW Operations Staff and the German Naval Staff were drafting studies for further German penetrations into the Near East. These were based on the occupation of the entire Mediterranean zone (see the remarkable Navy memorandum of 6/6/41), and also on the hopes of future cooperation with the Japanese (see the plans of the German Navy as regards a Japanese attack on Singapore, emphatically supported by Admiral Raeder, C-in-C of German Naval Forces, during his conferences with Hitler on 27/12/40, 8-9/1, 4/2, 18/3, and 20/4/41 ; and Hitler's Directive No. 24 of 5/3/41). These were all directed unmistakably towards the Indian Ocean area and Central Asia. At this juncture, Hitler's instructions on 17 February 1941 to the OKW Operations Staff included what was perhaps his most extravagant order, namely to prepare 'a study for an advance from Afghanistan into India following BARBAROSSA'.

The pro-Axis coup in Iraq under Rashid Ali el-Gailani offered new possibilities for the coordination of anti-British elements in the Middle East, Afghanistan, and eventually even in British India. Abdul Majid Khan, who happened to be 'incidentally' in the Berlin area during the spring of 1941, resumed with an extraordinary assiduity his attempts to obtain German guarantees for Afghan territorial claims. He began to propagate the idea of an 'extended Axis' of Berlin-Baghdad-Kabul, in order to win Axis support for the Saadabad countries. Yet, his demonstrative pro-Axis sympathies suddenly cooled when Iraq, followed by Syria, were occupied by British forces.

The earliest German draft entitled "Declaration of Free India" was prepared by the Foreign Ministry on 19 May 1941. It resulted, on the one hand, from Bose's vigorous activities in Berlin and from the fresh German impetus to assist Rashid Ali's revolt on the other, from Hitler's consent to support Iraq with arms and instructors (Directive No. 30 of 23/5/41), which however could never be wholehearted since he had already made up his mind 'to break the British position between the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf, only after



BARBAROSSA'. (*ibid.*) The German draft declaration on India, even if it had been broadcast like the joint Italian-German declaration of sympathy with the Arab cause (broadcast on 21 October 1940), could hardly raise the standard of revolt in the areas concerned, not only because it was vague in form and content, but essentially because the radio reception in such areas was extremely poor and intermittent. British counter-propaganda was much more effective and efficient, and bazaar gossip extremely unpredictable. The German envoy in Kabul, Hans Pilger, whose judgment was more balanced since he was closer to India than his draft-drawing colleagues in Berlin, believed not in words but in concrete action, such as acts of sabotage and armed incursions into Indian territory. But optimism in Berlin during the Iraqi revolt was so high that Bose sent on 20 May a secret message to 'Comrades in India' through Rahmat Khan, that included the following passage :

"I am expecting from the Axis Powers within a fortnight an open declaration regarding Indian Independence. Immediately after this declaration I intend starting propaganda and activity, including radio propaganda, in the name of Free India Movement. I expect Axis declaration to say that the constitution of the Free Indian State will be decided by the Indian people themselves."<sup>22</sup>

The Indian cause had a handful of sympathizers in Germany among Foreign Ministry and Army circles, but the indifference displayed by the upper echelons of the Ministry, the Government, the Nazi Party and Armed Forces meant that they could virtually do nothing about it. Even had they been more cooperative, petty inter-departmental rivalries would have undermined the conscious efforts of the few to achieve a comprehensive military and political programme vis-a-vis India, not to mention the influence of Hitler himself whose repugnance for extra-European liberation movements was made abundantly clear on several occasions.

The failure of the Axis encroachment in Iraq and Syria changed the strategic balance in the Middle East to Germany's disadvantage. Furthermore, Afghanistan became



inaccessible after the outbreak of the German-Soviet war and particularly after the Anglo-Soviet occupation of Iran. The only option open to speculations, and decisively dominating Hitler's thoughts, remained a rapid collapse of Soviet Russia. Military historians agree that even a relatively small increase in the number of German units deployed in the Mediterranean might have radically changed the course of events in this area, since German logistic deficiencies were sufficiently counterbalanced by a more serious weakness on the British side. Nevertheless, it was Hitler alone who decided that the attack on Russia should take priority over the domination of the Mediterranean, and who thus postponed the eventual advance in the direction of India until the post-BARBAROSSA stage of his 'programme'.

#### IV. S. C. BOSE'S ACTIVITIES AFTER BARBAROSSA

The outbreak of war between Germany and Russia shocked Bose profoundly. He felt that at one stroke his plans were falling to pieces. In a letter of 5 July 1941 from Rome to Dr. Woermann, Under Secretary of State in the German Foreign Ministry, he explained his reasons against an early return to Berlin and emphasized that 'the public reaction in my country to the new situation in the East is unfavourable towards your Government'. He repeated his disapproval to Woermann twelve days later calling the Russian-German war a tragic mistake because 'the Indian people felt definitely that Germany was the aggressor and was for India, therefore, another dangerous imperialist power'. Under such conditions, Bose insisted, any propaganda work would be extremely difficult. Bose's bitter disappointment in relation to the German attack on Soviet Russia was genuine though he was unable to express it publicly. This apparent inconsistency soon became a welcome target for the British-sponsored counter-propaganda<sup>23</sup>. He rightly felt that the threat caused by the approaching German armies might easily be presented to the Indian public through British propaganda as an attempt to substitute German occupation for British rule and not as an attempt to liberate India.



Continuous German procrastination in the matter of the Indian Declaration, once already promised, led the desperate Bose on 15 August to address a sharp letter to Ribbentrop in which he even threatened the Germans that 'the nearer the German armies move towards India, the more hostile will the Indian people become towards Germany. The march of the German troops towards the East will be regarded as the approach, not of a friend but of an enemy'. There were some members of the Foreign Ministry, such as Dr. Woermann and the State Secretary Weizsacker, who were in favour of releasing the Indian Declaration, together with the Arab one, and saw the justification for such an action in the recent Anglo-Soviet invasion of Iran. However, since their last conversation in April, Ribbentrop had kept refusing to meet Bose. Thus, neither the fortuity of the Anglo-Soviet occupation of Iran, nor the challenge of the Atlantic Charter, which soon was to be regarded as the political programme of the anti-Axis coalition, could bring about a radical change in Germany's attitude towards the colonial peoples. The missed opportunity in the spring of 1941 in Iraq was soon to be followed by others.

Bose himself became so disillusioned with the German attitude that he decided to retire for a cure to Bad Gastein. He spent most of September and October there because, in his opinion, there was nothing he could do in Berlin. It was during the first week of September that Hitler, who in any case never ceased to long for a political arrangement with Britain<sup>24</sup>, decided to postpone the Indian Declaration lest the British have a pretext to invade Afghanistan in order to improve their military balance in India. Bose was instructed through Woermann on 10 September that the Declaration would be postponed until German operations on the Eastern front had made a greater impact.

Only in the field of organisation could the Indian question score certain successes in Axis Europe. Just as the German Foreign Ministry had opened its Special India Department (*Sonderreferat Indien*), so Rome had set up its *Ufficio India*. The foundation of the Free India Centre (*Zentralstelle Freies*



*Indien*) under Bose-Mazzotta in Berlin was actually preceded by the opening of the *Centro India* in Rome, headed by an Indian Muslim, Mohammed Iqbal Schedai. The relationship between Bose and Schedai was from the outset full of animosity, for both personal as well as tactical reasons. Besides, it was the Pakistan issue which made them adversaries since Bose strongly opposed any steps leading to the partition of India. Schedai increasingly accused 'His Excellency Mazzotta' of having dictatorial ambitions, and all endeavour on the part of German and Italian diplomats to reconcile them proved in vain. The establishment of a rival Indian centre in Rome hastened German activities so that the Free India Centre in Berlin could begin its activities as early as October 1941. Dr. Trott was sent to Rome on behalf of the Special India Department in order to find out more about Italian activities in this field. His investigation came to the conclusion that Rome was slightly ahead of Berlin, for the *Himalaya Station*, the Indian radio service in Rome, had already begun its broadcasts. Its German counterpart, the *Azad Hind Radio*, though it started broadcasting later, was nevertheless better organized. As far as reception conditions in British India itself were concerned, these remained largely a matter of guesswork. (It would be nevertheless a matter of great interest if Indian researchers were to collect and evaluate whatever little evidence there is on the influence of Axis broadcasts on the Indian public, especially during the two major crises of 1942, the Cripps Mission and the August Rebellion.) Furthermore, the German High Command (OKW), assuming that the total defeat of Russia was a matter of a few weeks, also agreed to Bose's proposals to raise an "Indian Legion" of regimental strength, which was originally to be included in the multinational units that the OKW hoped to use in order to penetrate the Middle East and eventually into Afghanistan.

While preparations in the military sphere were dealt with by the OKW, the Foreign Ministry took charge of matters relating to the organisation of the Free India Centre. Apart from the Special India Department, other committees were to



be set up, such as the one for the Pan-Arab and another for the Pan-Turanian questions, which were to be of direct support to various nationalist groups in the Middle East and Central Asia after the envisaged victory over the Red Army. On 16 October Ribbentrop ordered Keppler, State Secretary 'for Special Purposes' and the nominal head of the Special India Department, to re-examine the question of using the Indian prisoners-of-war who had been at the time transferred from Italy to Germany. He also ordered that suitable men should be employed for broadcasting in the event of the planned German advance into Transcaucasia and Iran, so that everything could be 'fully ready for action in about two months'. Ribbentrop reported to Hitler about the Arab and Indian question on 13 November. The outline of his report perfectly fitted the OKW strategic plans for the post-BARBAROSSA period, already formulated in Hitler's perhaps most spectacular war directive No. 32 of 11 June 1941. But Ribbentrop disagreed with his subordinates from the Foreign Ministry that there was an urgent need for the immediate release of a joint Indo-Arab declaration. He agreed with his master that an ill-considered and precipitate Indian declaration would only make the British more stubborn and less amenable to eventual compromise. Thus, in those areas where direct military pressure could not be exercised, German tactics were to avoid alienating Britain and to compel her instead to come to the negotiating table by means of subversive activities and propaganda agitation among the natives. Their aim was not to destroy the Empire but rather to preserve its existence under a new *modus vivendi*, which would this time, of course, be dictated by Herr Hitler. With Russia destroyed and the Suez Canal occupied by Rommel's *Afrika Korps*, German armoured divisions pushing through the Middle East towards India, Japan ready to attack British positions from the rear, and America not yet a belligerent factor, Britain would be compelled, so they thought, to accept the Nazi peace conditions in order to save her Empire.

Bose, whose presence in Europe could no longer be kept



secret since it had been announced in the American press, broadcast on the All-India Radio, and even discussed in government circles in New Delhi and London, began to worry that the British would label him as a 'Quisling'. On 29 November he was at last received by Ribbentrop who had denied him audience since April. But Bose was to be disappointed again because the Reich's Foreign Minister not only avoided any direct answer to his repeated demands that Hitler's passages from *Mein Kampf*, expressing contempt for the Indians, ought to be altered, but because Ribbentrop also explicitly rejected the idea of an Indian Declaration, pointing out 'that propaganda would never bring about a free India or Arabia', and that, in his view, 'the Axis could speak only when German troops were beyond the Caucasus and Suez,...for otherwise any propaganda effect would come to nought. It was the guiding principle of German policy not to promise anything that could not be carried out later'.

It is therefore not surprising that the Germans, even in the field of political propaganda, now began to hesitate wondering whether it would not be wiser to postpone their Indian activities altogether. Five days before the Japanese launched their attack in the Far East, Keppler even asked Dr. Trott if it were worth continuing German propaganda towards India and suggested postponing it until a later stage in the war when further military success would make it more urgent.

#### V. S. C. BOSE AND AXIS POLICY VIS-A-VIS INDIA AFTER THE OUTBREAK OF THE PACIFIC WAR

The Japanese onslaught in the Far East gave the Indian nationalists collaborating with the Axis a new chance. At a time when Germany's Indian policy had been at a low ebb, Japan, who until the very eve of the Pacific war had kept her two European allies in obscurity over her Indian plans, suddenly broke the silence with a series of unusually intensive soundings on India conducted via Rome, which started more than two weeks before the attack on Pearl Harbour. Berlin's reply however, took the form of a warning that 'a Japanese



declaration regarding Indian independence should be coordinated with us and Italy with respect to content as well as time' (Woermann's despatch to General Ott, German Ambassador in Tokyo, 8/12/41).

As a result of an Italian initiative the Special India Department and *Ufficio India* convened a conference in Berlin between 7 and 12 December 1941 to discuss the main outlines of joint German-Italian policies vis-a-vis India and to agree upon the role which Japan was supposed to play. But the results were vague and restraint again prevailed as far as the Indian Declaration was concerned. This drew strong protests from Bose and Schedai, who were both present at the conference. Only in regard to the question of the Indian Legion had any progress been made. Furthermore, the encounter between Bose and Schedai added more fuel to their mutual antagonism. While the latter was accused for his alleged pre-war links with the communist movement in Europe and his support for the Pakistan idea, the former had to defend himself against impeachments that the Forward Bloc in India had begun to collaborate with the Communists in support of Soviet Russia. The verdict of the Berlin conference came out against the Pakistan solution because it was regarded as playing into British hands.

Both Bose and Schedai became increasingly impatient with Axis hesitation in supporting the Indian cause. Disappointed with the Germans, Bose began to approach the Japanese through their mission in Berlin to see whether they would agree to his transfer to East Asia so that he could organize the Indian independence movement there. Although the Japanese Ambassador in Berlin, General Oshima, urged Hitler during their meetings on 13 December 1941 and again on 3 January 1942 to coordinate German and Japanese military operations as regards timing as well as the general strategic direction, with the ultimate objective to join in the Indian Ocean area, Hitler's answers remained evasive. He would authorize no declaration of independence or effective assistance to the freedom movements in India and the Arab world until German



troops had crossed the Caucasus. But Oshima's positive attitude to the Indian cause could be misleading since he was speaking only for himself with no specific instructions from Tokyo, where the Government was in no hurry to reply.

At this juncture one is led to ask why the negotiations on the Military Convention among the Axis Powers, signed on 18 January 1942, did not result in a joint arrangement concerning Axis propaganda towards the Indian and Arab world? The Military Convention divided the zones of prospective military operations between Germany and Italy on the one hand, and Japan on the other, along the Long. 70° East and thus gave India a central place in joint Axis strategy. By mid-December 1941 in Berlin, negotiations had started between Germany, Italy and Japan, on how to counter the 'Roosevelt-Churchill Strategy' through a joint Tripartite Pact propaganda committee with the aim of supporting the peoples suppressed by Britain, in particular the Indians and the Arabs. But the whole institution of the Tripartite Pact, which had existed since September 1940, was nothing more than a show-piece set up for ceremonial purposes only, while each Axis partner continued to pursue his own selfish aims. Similarly, the talks between the German and Japanese naval representatives in Berlin, Admiral Groos and Nomura, which started as early as January 1941, and dealt with the necessity of Axis military cooperation in the Indian Ocean, including the elimination of Singapore as Japan's principal war objective, did not exercise any influence on the top Axis decision-makers in matters of strategy. Japanese planners, of course, revealed nothing to their German colleagues of their secret designs for the New Order in Asia and specifically for India, which were at the time part of their future plans for the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.

In spite of the lack of agreement with the Japanese side, the Special India Department was making preparations for a massive propaganda campaign to be launched as soon as the leaders in Berlin and Tokyo gave the signal. A new draft of a joint declaration on Free India as well as on the Arab



countries, this time with Japan as co-signatory, was prepared on 10 January. Its text was vague as usual but well balanced. The emphasis lay this time on the idea of non-intervention on the part of the Axis Powers. It can perhaps be regarded as the best draft ever produced in Berlin as regards India. The Indian Declaration was to be released on 26 January, observed by the Congress as the "Independence Day". However, on the same day that the Germans drafted their new declaration, the Japanese let it be known, again via Rome, that they were against a premature release of the Declaration on the grounds of earlier Axis failures in Iraq and Iran and because of the hostility still demonstrated by Indian nationalists towards Japan.

The Axis Powers were losing momentum in India as well. The recent sessions of the Congress Party showed signs of weakening in their determination to continue the policy of non-cooperation vis-a-vis Britain (cf. the declaration of the CWC in Bardoli, and that of the AICC in Wardha in December 1941). Tokyo was thus becoming aware that the Axis could not rely upon the support of the Indian political parties, particularly that of the Congress, for they all shared an anti-Axis view even if they were not explicitly pro-British. Potential collaborators with the Axis were hard to find in India except for a handful of minor sects operating underground. All in all, a declaration in favour of Indian Independence, so the Japanese believed, could only fulfil its aims if followed by a demonstration of power—an opinion which coincided with that of Hitler. This was very much against Bose's own vision of India. He had to reject flatly the Japanese version of India's hostility towards the Axis liberators and to defend his own view which told him that the vast majority of the Indian population was simply waiting for the chance to overthrow their British oppressors. The attitude of the Japanese was presumably dictated by their reasoning that they first wished to complete the conquest of Burma and in the meantime allow the Indian political movement to ferment without interference from outside. Only later when its intensity would reach the



required level, a military relief operation might be considered necessary.

Meanwhile the German spy ring in Kabul had contingency plans for starting disruptive activities in Indian territory in the event of the arrival of Axis troops (scheduled undertakings TIGER and LOTOS). The *Abwehr*, German Counter-Intelligence, drafted detailed schemes for sabotage and agitation among the border tribes in order to use them against British frontier defences as well as for the construction of landing strips of German aircraft. Bose himself was invited by the *Abwehr* in January and February to attend their Berlin conferences on India. He tried to persuade the participants that the Japanese occupation of Burma could result in a 'second Dunkirk', and that the widespread chaos and panic among the British forces in India would facilitate Japanese landing on the Indian coast. But Bose was unable to receive any guarantee on the question of the Indian Declaration, nor any knowledge when a Japanese attack on India would materialize. The answers of the Japanese Colonel Yamamoto, present during the meetings, merely indicated that although India was the potential target for Japanese operations, she was certainly not the only one, for Australia and the Soviet Far East were being discussed in Tokyo at the same time.

Like Bose in Berlin, Schedai was worried about repeated postponements of the Indian Declaration. But whereas Bose would not yet reveal his identity through the mass media, Schedai conducted broadcasts from Rome without difficulty, and apparently without censorship too, judging by his violent and ill-considered attacks against Gandhi and Nehru. At this moment Rome indeed appeared more active than Berlin in the field of Indian propaganda. As soon as Rommel resumed his offensive in Cyrenaica at the end of January 1942, the Italians were urging Berlin to issue the Declaration on India and the Arab countries without delay. But Berlin easily resisted Italian pressures by arguing that because of the Japanese refusal to participate, the release of the Declaration could serve no purpose.



While encouraging reports about anti-British activities in India and Afghanistan continued to arrive via Kabul, the Wilhelmstrasse followed with some anxiety Japanese attempts to set up a rival centre for Indian propaganda in Bangkok. The demand for Bose's transfer to East Asia, formulated on many occasions by the Indian nationalists in Bangkok, was rejected by Ribbentrop on 18 January. It might perhaps be worth questioning at this point the genuineness of Japan's plans vis-a-vis India after her launching of the DAI TOA SENSO—the Great East Asian War. Because of the lack of information it was believed in Berlin that Japan, having no designs on India of its own, was merely interested in cultural broadcasts without political ambitions. And yet, Japan, in the weeks preceding the outbreak of the war in the Far East had been involved in activities which had some relevance to India, and about which German diplomats in Bangkok or Tokyo had no exact information. A Japanese officer, Major Fujiwara, was ordered in October 1941 to set up a small liaison unit, called *Fujiwara Kikan*, with the purpose of subverting the loyalty of Indian soldiers in British garrisons of Malaya and Singapore, of organising the Indian community in South-East Asia against the British and of making them favourably disposed towards Japanese troops. He had no difficulty in reaching an agreement with the "Indian Independence League" in Thailand, headed by Pritam Singh, as well as with Captain Mohan Singh, captured in December, who wanted to raise an Indian liberation army assisted by the Japanese. But he was less successful with the "Indian National Council", created in Bangkok by Swami Satyananda Puri, which wanted to protect the interests of the Indian community outside India while maintaining close contacts with the independence movement as represented by the Congress Party at home, and was therefore challenging Japan's desire for overall control. Despite all this evidence, it seemed, on the whole, as if Japan had no concrete plans, either military or political, in relation to India. Furthermore, it should not be entirely forgotten that among certain circles in Tokyo India still remained the most suitable pawn with which to



bargain, in the event of Soviet willingness to negotiate a truce. No specific efforts were therefore made by Tokyo at that stage to encourage Indian aspirations towards independence.

The deadlock in the Axis camp over the Indian question was suddenly broken with the news of the capitulation of Singapore. But despite General Tojo's solemn speech of 16 February, conveying the message to the Indians that they should start a revolt, the Tokyo Government showed no immediate indication of adopting a more radical line in support of the Indian cause. In Berlin however, Bose at last dropped his incognito and broadcast his first public statement over the *Azad Hind Radio* on 19 February. On the same day Ribbentrop ordered the publication of the so-called "Standard Theses and Guidelines for German Foreign Propaganda". One week after his speech Bose put forward an ambitious scheme proposing coordination of the entire Axis Indian propaganda with the forthcoming advance of their military forces towards India. This scheme comprised not only Bose's main ideas known to us from his earlier memoranda but included, above all, the important factor of Japanese advance which, he hoped, would soon be directed with all its might towards India. He also recommended the setting up of a joint German-Japanese broadcasting centre in Rangoon, as soon as the Japanese would occupy it. There can be no doubt that at this moment the Wilhelmstrasse anticipated and welcomed the joint Axis Declaration on India, as we can read in Ribbentrop's telegram of 21 February sent to General Ott, his envoy in Tokyo.

On the 22nd February appeared the new draft of the German declaration on Free India.\* There was a noticeable change of tone in it towards a more demagogic and quasisocialist phraseology. "India for the Indians" now figured as the central slogan of the draft declaration and was underlined by the pledge of non-interference in Indian affairs. However, it would be naïve to expect that the Axis Powers were ready at this particular moment to entirely foreswear their apostolic mission. The draft therefore expressed a deep concern 'to end—

\* See Appendix 1. for full text of the original draft in facsimile. Ed.



on a basis of social justice—the misery and poverty of the Indian people, and to see the exploited masses assisted to a proper standard of living as well as to employment and prosperity'. Four days later Dr. Trott on behalf of the Special India Department submitted to Ribbentrop the draft directives concerning the 'forthcoming Indian Action'. Its general outlines reiterated that the aim of Axis radio propaganda was to eliminate India as the Allied strategic base, and maintained that the Axis should avoid interfering in problems of Indian domestic politics, and abstain from attacks on Gandhi and Nehru. A detailed day-by-day programme was appended as to how the 'Action' should proceed, starting with Bose's public statement, followed by his reception by the Fuehrer, and culminating dramatically in the joint Axis Declaration on Free India. Trott was concerned that the text of the Declaration should include formulations which would have the maximum propaganda impact on the Indian masses, such as the proclamation that 'the Tripartite Pact Powers were fighting the freedom struggle for all nations and wished to express solidarity with the suppressed peoples'. On 1 March Goebbels optimistically noted in his diary that 'the Indian crisis is on the upgrade. We have succeeded in prevailing upon the Indian nationalist leader Bose to issue an imposing declaration of war against England. It will be published most prominently in the German press and commented upon. In that way we shall now begin our official fight on behalf of India, even though we don't yet admit it openly'.<sup>25</sup> Thus, by the end of February 1942, German propaganda on India seemed to have reached an intensity which was never to be equalled during the rest of the war. Furthermore, Italian support for the 'Indian Action' was granted and included silencing Schedai who had to promise complete calm and restraint and to stop attacking Bose. But the vital spark needed to light the fuse for joint Axis action on India had to await Tokyo's approval.

Why, then, did Tokyo refuse to reveal its intentions vis-a-vis India to the German ally? Despite the fact that since the fall of Singapore the Japanese press had embarked on euphoric



comments about the future expansion of the Co-Prosperity Sphere and was currently referring to India and Australia as the imminent targets of Japan's advance, the authorities in Tokyo observed a conspicuous silence. They seemed to be constantly afraid that India, like China, might easily fall into a state of anarchy which could be exploited by Bolshevik Russia, and they had neither the resources nor the manpower to administer the whole of British India. Furthermore, as Ott emphasized in his despatch of 5 March, they had not yet made up their minds about which section of the Indian population they should collaborate with after the collapse of the Raj. In addition, Tokyo's restraint was influenced to a great extent by the stubborn attitude of the OKW, dominated by Hitler, and utterly dependent on the continental war doctrine and the campaign in Russia, which kept refusing the Japanese invitation to concentrate the major war effort of Germany and Italy on the British key position of Suez. This idea, containing in its full version the establishment of a link between Germany and Japan across the Indian Ocean, was seriously put forward by the Japanese Naval Staff and convincingly supported by its German counterpart (see the German Naval Staff memoranda of 12 and 20/2/42, and Raeder-Hitler Naval Conferences on 13/2, 12/3, 13/4/42). By establishing the link between Germany and Japan, 'the war would be practically won and the British Empire would be finished', Ott conveyed in his despatch to Ribbentrop on 2 March ; 'but this break-through would have to occur soon in order to bring the war to a speedy and happy conclusion', the message continued. Moreover, in the opinion of the Japanese, if the elimination of Russia and a simultaneous opening of the route to India were not possible a political arrangement between Germany and Soviet Russia was to be reached in order to facilitate the necessary concentration of German forces in the Mediterranean. For Hitler however, any idea of a separate peace with Russia, a second Brest-Litovsk, was out of the question. Tokyo immediately drew the appropriate conclusion from the German refusal and refrained from further diplomatic initiative in this field.



The Cripps Mission seems to have provided the Axis Powers with another important opportunity to resume their Indian activities. But while Bose was protesting in despair, German propaganda at first patiently awaited the results of the Cripps talks in a state of passivity. Once again Bose decided to retire to his favourite spa asylum of Bad Gastein, from where he blamed the Axis Powers for having wasted yet another chance to help the Indian cause. In this despairing mood he made a bold attack directly accusing Germany of not working seriously for India's independence, of endlessly postponing the recruitment of Indian prisoners-of-war for the Legion, and of even being anxious to reach a compromise with Britain should the opportunity arise. If there was no instant improvement in Germany's Indian policy, then, Bose threatened, he would prefer to return to India. But his request for facilities to go to East Asia was again explicitly rejected by Ribbentrop. As regards the Italian attitude, the opinion of Count Ciano was that the Axis could no longer afford to postpone the Joint Declaration on India and the Arab countries indefinitely, because the presence of Gailani, the Grand Mufti and Bose in the Axis camp might soon lose its attraction. He therefore suggested that the Declaration be published immediately even without Japanese approval since Tokyo was so reluctant to act. The Italian initiative was rebuffed in Berlin with the usual reference to Hitler's disapproval.

The danger that the prevailing political deadlock in India might be settled by a compromise between Cripps and the Congress led Bose to broadcast several violent speeches on this issue, including an open letter to Sir Stafford Cripps on 27 March 1942 which received wide coverage through the Axis mass media. In reply, British propaganda tried to discredit Bose by every means. Rumours were spread for instance about his death—but the evidence was soon found shaky.<sup>26</sup> It was this imminent threat that the Cripps Mission might succeed—that brought about the resumption of propaganda activities on the German side almost on the scale in which they had been conducted during the bustling fortnight following the



surrender of Singapore. A new, shortened version of the draft Declaration on India was prepared in Berlin on 1 April but its wording appeared ambiguous and vague. For instance, the formula 'Free India' was markedly missing from the text. This seemed to indicate that German propaganda specialists were already prepared to face up to the consequences of Cripps succeeding in his negotiations. And indeed, the chief specialist on India in the Foreign Ministry, Dr. Alsdorf, suggested in his detailed analysis of 2 April that a compromise between Cripps and the Indian leaders remained 'at least probable'. But German reports through Kabul tended to be more optimistic about whether India was on the verge of disruption, thus showing pro-Axis sympathies, so that large-scale sabotage activities, as organized by the *Abwehr*, could be timed to profit from the failure of the Indo-British negotiations.

The Japanese naval thrust into the Bay of Bengal, culminating in the attack on Ceylon between 5 and 9 April, 1942, and followed by the news of the failure of the Cripps Mission, seemed to have suddenly fulfilled the two essential preconditions for a successful Indian action on the part of the Axis Powers : namely, a profound domestic crisis in India, combined with an Axis military operation on Indian territory itself. When the Japanese Foreign Minister was asked by the German Ambassador whether the naval raid into the Bay of Bengal had been conceived in conjunction with the Cripps Mission, Tojo unhesitatingly answered in the affirmative (cf. Ott's despatch to Ribbentrop, 14/4/42; see also *Ciano's Diary*, entry 6/4/42). But the Japanese 'bona fide' gesture in order to attract parallel German attempts to approach the Indian Ocean from the west did not produce the expected echo, mainly because of Hitler's obsessive desire to go ahead with his summer offensive in southern Russia. The Ceylon raid nevertheless created the unmistakable impression that the long-expected invasion of India by Japan was under way.

It was at this moment when the Allied standing in India happened to be at its lowest ebb that the Japanese Government



decided for the first time to come forward with their own Joint Declaration on Free India. But the Japanese draft, received in Berlin on 13 April, was considered by the Wilhelmstrasse experts 'too journalistic and hardly concrete', and they instantly proposed to replace it by a corrected German draft. As for the Italians, both Mussolini and Ciano welcomed the Japanese initiative and urged the Germans to support the Japanese draft promptly in spite of its formal shortcomings. The corrected German draft together with the original Japanese version were then presented by Ribbentrop to Hitler on 16 April with a strong plea for its acceptance. In order to dispose of Hitler's deeply inherent objections against such a declaration, Ribbentrop tried to persuade him that, if it were published, those 'peace-favouring circles in Britain' would certainly not be discouraged from seeking a separate peace with Germany, nor would they misinterpret it as an Axis attempt to step in Britain's shoes in her Indian realm. Alternatively, Ribbentrop went on, the Axis Declaration on India might well function as a political deterrent in response to which these 'peace-favouring circles in Britain' should sue for peace in order to prevent the Axis Powers from implementing their declaration on India. For, we must not forget, the idea of a political arrangement with Britain remained Hitler's fundamental *arriere-pensee* throughout the war. However, in spite of Ribbentrop's elaborate efforts, Hitler refused to support the Declaration and agreed only on Bose's transfer to East Asia. Although he would take up the question of the Indian Declaration again on 29 April during his meeting with Mussolini in the Klessheim Castle near Salzburg, he repeated his refusal to support what he called a 'platonic declaration to grant freedom to peoples as long as the military situation does not allow the enforcement of this guarantee if necessary even with arms'. If Germany and Italy were to go ahead, nevertheless, and issue the Declaration, Hitler foresaw two likely reactions: India would either fail to respond at all—a fact which enemy propaganda would not miss and present as a proof of Axis impotence—or, even if a popular uprising were to take place in



India and in the Arab countries, the British would only welcome such an opportunity which would provide them with an excuse to eliminate all elements of the opposition. But if Japan wanted to announce such a declaration on her own, Hitler continued, she was welcome to do so, as her military position was more advantageous and she was contemplating further penetrations into the Indian Ocean. While Oshima was constantly pressed by strong-worded telegrams from Tokyo to obtain a German adherence to the Declaration, German diplomacy embarked on delaying tactics vis-a-vis Japan to avoid committing themselves.

But Hitler's seemingly sober military realism, when it came to the question of Germany proclaiming her support for the Indians and Arabs, reflected more than his uncertainty on the eve of the launching of major military operations in Russia and in North Africa. Hitler himself, faced with the astonishing Japanese advance, was deeply concerned with the deterioration of Britain's prestige 'no longer strong enough to act as a dominant race'<sup>27</sup>. Bose's position at this moment was not an enviable one. Expecting a major showdown in India after the breakdown of the Cripps negotiations, he was nevertheless powerless to do anything, apart from his broadcasts, to encourage the revolutionary atmosphere in India. But during his visit to Rome he succeeded in persuading Mussolini to accept his arguments as regards an urgent Axis Declaration on India. Then, on 9 May he wrote to Ribbentrop asking him to revise the Salzburg decision. Ribbentrop therefore presented another memorandum to Hitler on 14 May. However, all these combined pleas of Mussolini, Ribbentrop, and Bose fell on deaf ears and Hitler decided to retain the Salzburg decision. Faced with Berlin's wait-and-see attitude, Bose reached the ultimate point of his disillusionment over German policy towards India. On 22 May he wrote to Ribbentrop that conditions in India were 'ripe for a revolution' and that 'the final effort should be made for achieving India's political emancipation'<sup>28</sup>. He now regarded his presence in the East as 'absolutely essential' and asked the German Government to facilitate his travel to



Asia in order to perform his duty as the 'leader of the national revolution'.

Meanwhile Japan's attitude to the Indian question underwent a marked change. During the first week of May at the latest, that is, after the battle of the Coral Sea, Tokyo stopped pressing Berlin for an immediate release of the Indian Declaration. The German Naval Staff memoranda reveal that the Japanese Navy decided to postpone its contemplated invasion against Ceylon and Madagascar, because of the coming monsoon, and because the European Axis failed to attack the Middle East at the time when the Japanese demonstrated their readiness to advance into the Indian Ocean. But while criticizing the German engagement in Russia as being of a secondary importance from the point of view of a wishful joint Axis strategy, the Japanese Navy nevertheless were to divert their prospective offensive strikes from the Indian Ocean towards the Midway Islands, where it was to encounter its major defeat during the first week of June and later towards the Southern Pacific where the Japanese forces were to be involved in forlorn campaigns of attrition, similar to that of the German armies in Russia. It became clear now that the most favourable moment for a concerted Axis action in the Indian Ocean area had passed and that neither Germany nor Japan was able or willing to explore the political issues at stake in the Arab and Indian world.

Although Bose was to finally meet the German dictator in person on 27 May in the Fuehrer's Headquarters, Hitler, at this stage, was able to offer him only the use of a German submarine for the journey to East Asia. Bose opened the historical encounter by addressing Hitler as 'an old revolutionary', but the Fuehrer retained his opposition to the issue of the Declaration and described himself as a soldier who conducted the struggle with instruments of power rather than a political propagandist. If he had as much as half-a dozen panzer divisions plus several more motorized divisions south of the Caucasus to support the Arab and Egyptian insurgents, he would not hesitate to issue such a declaration. But such an opportunity



might not occur for three months or even for two years. (A short German-Italian declaration on the independence of Egypt was nevertheless issued on 2/7/42.) As for India, Hitler declared, she was 'endlessly remote from Germany' and could be reached only by air or land along the Persian Gulf or across Afghanistan. The real route to India, according to Hitler, would have to be over Russia's dead body. Hitler did however admit to Bose that the British Raj could only be broken by simultaneously combining popular uprising in India with the military thrust of the Axis. Bose, who must have felt uneasy at being treated as a pupil by 'the old revolutionary', boldly asked him to clarify certain passages in *Mein Kampf* hostile towards the Indians which were frequently exploited by enemy propaganda. Thus he took up once again one of his earliest criticisms on Nazi racial practice. Hitler could not, of course, admit any fault in his racialist views and merely indicated that the original aim has been to discourage the advocates of passive resistance in Germany who had seen in India an example to be followed.\*

The meeting with Hitler left Bose profoundly shocked and rid him of his last illusions, if he had any left, about the sincerity of German aid to the Indian national movement. His desire to go to Asia thus became his No. 1 priority. Nevertheless he could not alter overnight the basic tenor of his propaganda. On 4 July in a telephone conversation with Rash Behari Bose, his namesake in Tokyo who as a Japanese protege had been put in charge of the Indian Independence League in East Asia, he emphasized that there was not the slightest hope that Gandhi or Nehru would ever support the Axis, and recommended Rash Behari to cooperate with the Forward Bloc which had, according to Subhas' words 'a large following in the country'. One of the Special India Department members in Berlin, F. J. Fuertwaengler, sharply disagreed with S. C. Bose's telephone message and wrote that 'to believe that there exists a pro-Axis or even pro-Japanese group in India...means to

\* See Appendix 2. for the full official account of the Bose-Hitler interview. Ed.



follow a phantom...At present the strongest anti-British factor remains Gandhi and his followers'.

To arrange Bose's transfer to Asia required both diplomatic and technical measures. On the diplomatic level, the Japanese response was not unequivocal. Although on the one hand Ribbentrop and Oshima reached a mutual agreement about Bose's transfer to Asia (cf. Ribbentrop-Oshima conversations of 2 and 24/6/42), on the other, the Tokyo Government was still speculating on the idea of establishing contacts with the Congress Party, notably with Gandhi, and might therefore find S. C. Bose's presence in Asia rather embarrassing. The wish to cooperate with the Congress was also strongly expressed by the majority of Indian nationalists in East Asia who were gathering in Bangkok during June 1942. Since the Germans had decided that their interest in India was only to 'keep the pot boiling' (cf. Hasso von Etzdorf Papers, entry 26/5/42) and no longer wanted S. C. Bose in Europe, the Japanese logically assumed that the main responsibility for carrying out Indian propaganda was theirs. The technical aspects of Bose's voyage to Asia were not easy to solve either. Although in the second half of June the Italians had offered to fly Bose non-stop from Rhodes to Rangoon, the Germans refused the idea considering it too dangerous. To prepare a submarine for the long journey round Africa needed much more time and was constantly postponed due to the opposition of the Japanese Navy.

Throughout the summer of 1942 the Germans were entirely absorbed in their military plans to make a successful breakthrough in the Russian and British defences in order to complete a gigantic pincer operation of the Axis forces meeting in the Near East, so that the extent of anti-British feelings in India, which was soon to culminate in the 'Quit India' rebellion, could not be adequately assessed in Berlin. The decreasing attention paid to India by the Germans upset Bose, who became extremely impatient at the repeated postponements of his journey to Asia. He was prepared to use the Italian aircraft regardless of the risks involved because, as he said in his letter of 23 July to Ribbentrop, 'in view of the internal



developments in India, I should like to be in the Far East in the first week of August, if possible'. It was not possible, but his political instinct proved right. The Congress rebellion was to happen before his return to Asia materialized.

With the outbreak of the 'Quit India' Rebellion the three main preconditions for the success of Axis policy vis-a-vis India seemed to be almost fulfilled. Firstly, an uprising in India against the British was taking place ; secondly, the Axis Powers were still holding the military initiative and could, though belatedly, coordinate their military operations in order to concentrate their main thrust in the direction of India; and thirdly, although S.C. Bose was still in Berlin, Germany was willing to send him to Asia so that the presence of the most prominent Indian leader in exile near his country might help to encourage the rebels. However, the Japanese, in spite of their constant instigations to bring about internal disorder in India, considered the Congress rebellion premature. Because their naval striking force never recovered after Midway and their land forces in Burma were not yet ready to launch a major offensive against India. Moreover, they were convinced that in the event of a Japanese attack on India anti-British resistance would cease immediately. Once the disturbances broke out Nazi propaganda could not possibly miss such a rare opportunity for undermining the morale of the Allies and to exploit what was considered a revolutionary situation. Optimistic speculations in Berlin about the effect of Axis broadcasts were further supported by despatches arriving from Asia throughout October. But Fuertwaengler, in his penetrating analysis of the August disturbances written on behalf of the Special India Department, warned that 'there is no pro-Axis group of dominant influence in India' and that in order to keep the rebellion going the Axis should refrain from any clumsy attempts to identify itself with the aims of the Congress<sup>29</sup>.

Although the Axis might have been interested in coordinating their own military operations with the disturbances in India, it was beyond the range of their influence to stimulate,



let alone to direct the domestic commotions in India. German planners in Kabul, who had plans for subversive activities against India, were for instance ordered to wait until the military advance of Axis troops. When by the end of the year the rioting areas in India were brought under control by the British, the propagandists in Berlin still believed that there was a fair chance of continuing disruptive agitation against what they thought was the weakest link in the Allied bloc, until the war situation would improve and allow them to strike a decisive blow<sup>80</sup>. But with German troops retreating from Transcaucasia and Egypt, and the Japanese remaining idle on India's eastern border, this was unrealistic. Thus for the immediate future the Germans could only rely upon the unpredictable effects of their broadcasts.

As for S.C. Bose, who had predicted the turbulent events in India without being able to reach Asia in time, he could hardly do more under the circumstances, than make violent speeches in support of the rebellion, and to press the Germans to let him depart for the Far East without delay. This position of political impotence was only increasing his frustration. In October and November Bose went again to Rome only to learn that on each occasion his flight had to be postponed. It is not reported whether he witnessed the downfall of Schedai who had caused him so much trouble in the last months by boycotting the transfer of Indian prisoners-of war from Italy to Germany. Schedai was completely discredited after his Indian volunteers, in contrast to the Indian Legion organized by Bose and the German High Command, serving under the Italians staged a mutiny on 9 November 1942.

It was not until 8 February 1943 that Bose could finally leave Germany aboard a submarine. By that time the Japanese Government also definitely gave up any hopes of using the Congress for their Indian plans and came to the conclusion that S.C. Bose was the only Indian leader with authority and reputation upon whom they could rely. In addition, there was a third factor which prevented the Japanese Government from receiving him earlier. By that time, too, the Indian independence



movement as well as the Indian National Army in East Asia suffered its most serious crisis which ended in its temporary dissolution. The technical details of Bose's transfer to the Far East have now been published<sup>31</sup>.

The Declaration on Free India for which Bose longed so much was issued in Singapore on 21 October 1943 ;\* this was far too late to help Bose. Although the Indian independence movement in Asia significantly stepped up its activities under S. C. Bose's firm leadership, the general strategic situation which had turned against the fortune of the Axis Powers, had already sealed its destiny.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

The year 1942 marked both the climax and the decline of the German-Japanese alliance and also of the chances of India attaining independence with the support of the Axis Powers. As a direct result of Axis military successes, both events, the fall of Singapore and the naval raid against Ceylon, initiated periods of the most intense activization of Indian propaganda on the Axis side. Although the pressure exercised by S. C. Bose and several Axis diplomats to change the negative attitude of Berlin and Tokyo in favour of a public declaration on Indian independence—and a sufficiently large number of draft documents illustrates these endeavours—neither Hitler nor the Japanese leaders were ready to foresake their egoistic plans to make room for a more flexible joint strategy, let alone to include fundamental political concessions towards the colonial peoples. Genuine support for and encouragement of anti-colonial movements might have gained the Axis Powers their most valuable ally in the struggle against the Western powers. India's political future from the Axis point of view was open to four hypothetical options :

1) India was to remain British in keeping with Hitler's original endeavour in resolving the 'Anglo-German misunderstanding'

\* In fact, this was not the Declaration on Free India by the Axis Powers but the Proclamation of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind issued by Netaji at a historic representative assembly of Indians in East Asia in Singapore on 21 October 1943, Ed.



by a 'gentleman's agreement', and in accordance with his own appreciation of the superior racial qualities the British had displayed as colonial administrators.

2) If Russia had joined the Axis and expanded towards the Persian Gulf, India together with Iran would have fallen into the Soviet sphere of interest. But the Axis attempt to divert Soviet expansion southwards soon failed as it became obvious that Russian ambitions were directed to their traditional outlets in Europe where Hitler's interests were equally at stake. Although certain circles in Tokyo supported this policy even after the failure of Molotov's talks in Berlin in November 1940, and even after the outbreak of the German-Soviet war in June 1941, the latter event constituted the decisive blow to this alternative.

3) As Germany were losing her military initiative during 1942, she gradually began to abandon her ambitious projects of advancing towards India and agreed to regard the latter as being part of the Japanese Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.

4) Finally, there was the possibility of the British surrendering their control either as a result of the Japanese advance or of a mass rebellion in India, or both factors happening together. Provided that the Japanese, in their relationship with India, would have avoided the fatal blunder they made in China, even the occupation of a smaller part of British India or of Ceylon would have been enough to inflict a serious blow to the Raj.

Little remains to be added to the importance of Subhas Chandra Bose in India's struggle for independence. Whatever his outstanding qualities as a nationalist leader, he was, nevertheless, too dependent on his anti-British allies, whom he did not choose on grounds of alleged affinity or sympathy with fascist ideologies. Political opportunism and often pragmatic calculations, though considerably stimulated by his passionate hatred of the British presence in India, dominated his behaviour. His impatience drove him inevitably into the arms of the Axis Powers and made him the tragic hero of Indian



nationalism, a Sisyphus-like figure, constantly overtaken by events and destined to lose the struggle against impossible odds. But the power of his personality was fascinating and no obstacle seemed to stop his genuine enthusiasm and inspiration which overwhelmed his supporters. His significant place in modern Indian history cannot therefore be overlooked. For the immense task which he aspired to carry out was the accomplishment of a great social revolution in his country against a foreign rule and India's own lethargy and many-sided internal diversities. The fulfilment of this task clearly exceeds the limits of the Second World War.



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## APPENDIX 1

22.2.1942.

*His*Draft declaration on India.  
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In this defensive war which has been forced upon them, Germany, Italy and Japan are fighting against the Powers that have dominated the world up to now by means of the subjugation and exploitation of other peoples. Their struggle serves a high ethical purpose. Germany, Italy and Japan are fighting at the same time for the freedom of all the peoples that have been outraged by British Imperialism. It is their earnest desire to see those peoples, too, once again free from the British yoke and in a position to shape unhampered their political and economic fate according to their own demands.

Amongst these nations which have had to suffer longest and most cruelly under British domination is numbered the ancient Indian people, a nation which during its great past has conferred such rich cultural benefits on humanity.

In the endeavour to open the gate of freedom to the Indian people also, at this historical moment when the British Empire is beginning to reel under



- 2 -

the blows delivered by the armed might of the tripartite Powers, the German, Italian and Japanese Governments hereby solemnly declare that they recognize the inalienable right of the Indian people to independence and self-determination.

### India for the Indians !

Germany, Italy and Japan are convinced that the Indian nation will break the political and economic bonds of British Imperialism and then as master of its own fate will carry out a sweeping transformation of its national life for the lasting benefit of its own people and as contribution to the welfare and the peace of the world. It is no concern of the Tripartite Powers what form the Indian people, after their liberation, will in future give to their interior political organization. It is a matter to be decided upon by the Indian people themselves and their leaders what constitution is the most suitable for their country and how it is to be put into practice. The Tripartite Powers are concerned to end - on a basis of social justice - the misery and poverty of the Indian people, and to see the exploited masses



- 3 -

assisted to a proper standard of living as well as to employment and prosperity.

Britain is the common enemy of the Indian people and of the peoples of the Tripartite Pact. The Tripartite Powers have always cherished friendly feelings towards the Indian people, and the close cultural and economic relations which they enjoyed with India have helped to cement this friendship. Nevertheless, the people of India are compelled by their alien British Government to consider themselves at war with Germany, Italy and Japan and to sacrifice both lives and property for the maintenance of the rule of their oppressors. As in the first World War, India's sons must again, at Britain's behest, give their lives on the battlefields of the West and of the East, in order that India is also in future to remain under British domination. Once more, Indian workers and peasants are compelled, by their own war work, to tighten the bonds which Britain intends shall hold them in slavery. That is what the British call Democracy and freedom.

All the promises of self-government made by Britain to India have proved so far to be lies.

135417 ./.



- 4 -

Fresh promises will be given by Britain simply to mislead the Indian people; they, again, will be broken. It will not be the victory of British Imperialism that will bring true freedom to the Indian people but solely the victory of the Tripartite Powers.

India has never had a more favourable opportunity of attaining freedom; the hour has struck when the Indian people themselves must act to shape their own destiny.

The sincere wishes of the peoples and Governments of Germany, Italy and Japan are with the people of India in their struggle for liberty, and the three Powers declare their readiness to afford India every possible assistance. They are joyfully awaiting the day when India, at last a free country, will take up her rightful position in a community of free nations.



## APPENDIX 2

**BOSE-HITLER INTERVIEW**

(The following is a free English translation of the official account of Netaji's interview with Herr Hitler from the archives of the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany, obtained in microfilm for the library of Netaji Research Bureau and later published in 'Staatsmaenner und Diplomaten bei Hitler', Part two, Ed. Andreas Hillgrueber, Bernard & Graefe fuer Wehrwesen, Frankfurt am Main, 1970. Ed.)

Berlin, 30 May 1942

*Record of the Conference between the Fuehrer and the  
Indian Nationalist leader Bose on 29 May 1942\**

Present : Federal Foreign Minister, Secretary of State Keppler, Ambassador Hewel.

At the outset Bose greeted the Fuehrer as an old revolutionary and thanked him for the honour bestowed upon him by this reception. The day would forever remain as a historical date in his life. He thanked the Fuehrer for the hospitality and the kindness shown to him by the German Government ever since his arrival more than a year ago, as also for the help received by him in his work for the liberation of his country and in the formation of an Indian Legion. When he had left India the previous year in January, his colleagues had been very worried about his personal fate and about the possibilities of serving the Indian cause. He (Bose) had however been driven to this course by instinct and deliberation. Looking back, he felt certain today that he had acted in the best interests of his country. The help of the "Tripartite Powers" was necessary for India, even though the actual war of independence had to be fought out by India herself. While India must do her duty in this war, she also needed the sympathetic support of the external world.

The time had now come for taking up the question of military collaboration with the Japanese armed forces. India attached a lot of importance to establishing the closest relationship with Germany and Italy and be assured of the sympathy and help of these countries, because she did not want to be left to the resources of Japan alone.

\* In the original record of Hitler's official interpreter Paul Schmidt, filed with the office of the Foreign Minister, the date of the meeting is given as 27 May, 1942. From other sources viz., records of the Supreme Command of the Wehrmacht, 'The Fuehrer's Diary' and the report of German News Bureau (DNB), it is clear that the conference took place on 29 May, 1942. As to the place of the meeting, the original record mentions the 'Fuehrer's headquarters' which is also not correct. The meeting took place in the Reich Chancellory in Berlin. Ed.



Bose then came to the topic of his journey to East Asia. This, he said, was motivated by the desire to find a point as close to India as possible, from where the Indian revolution could be directed. Of course, during his absence from Germany, propaganda would be carried on by his trusted men he would leave behind.

Finally Bose came up with the request that the Fuehrer should give him (Bose) some advice as an old and experienced revolutionary. Even though India was situated very far from Germany and the situation there was very different from that in Europe, there must be certain basic principles on the basis of which all revolutions had to be carried out.

The image of India had always been distorted and presented in an unfavourable light by British propaganda. The India which he (Bose) represented, was not the old philosophical one, but a new modern and active India.

In his reply the Fuehrer gave a brief description of the situation. Germany and India had the same merciless opponents. In the first place, there was England, which was ruling India and which had also ruled Europe by influencing inner-European discord and wanted to continue her rule. It was clear that this danger could be eliminated only by the military defeat of England, which would decisively deprive her of the power of exercising such an influence any further.

Besides the British, the Bolsheviks and the Americans were also common enemies. Moreover, England, America and Russia were not playing a clean game with one another. America wanted to take over the legacy of England, and Russia again hoped to be the successor of both. For Germany and India it was immaterial whether America took over the legacy of England or whether the Russians in the final analysis deceived both the Anglo-Saxon countries. In India one should not shut one's eyes to the Russian danger, and certain friendly views of Pandit Nehru regarding the Russians appeared extremely dangerous to him (the Fuehrer).

The distance between Germany and India was enormous. Though the opponents of both countries were the same, the war against them was being waged on battlefields which were very far from one another. In spite of this distance India would clearly feel the effect of Germany's victory in Europe. Without the successes of Germany during the last two and a half years, it could hardly have been possible for Japan to make such progress in East Asia, let alone the question of entering the war. India and Germany were therefore fighting the same battle against the same enemies, absolutely irrespective of where they met them.

India now had the one and only opportunity to shake off the English yoke without falling into the hands of the Russians, because Russia would now be completely smashed by Germany.

The battle in which Germany was involved was conducted by him (the



Fuehrer) not as a propaganda war as a politician, but essentially as a means of power politics as a soldier. In this connection he (the Fuehrer) allowed himself to be guided by the principle of not making any false prophecies. He had never promised anything which was beyond the range of his own effectiveness. In internal affairs as well, he had always avoided predicting victory when it lay beyond the range of possibilities of his own power.

For these reasons he refrained from making any prophecies about Egypt at the present time. Since the day before that day Rommel had gone into the attack. He could not visualize whether this operation would lead to the disintegration of the British front. In any case, Germany would do everything which lay within her power. She could not give anything more than its blood and labour. Should Rommel achieve only limited success, a comprehensive statement now about the fate of Egypt would only cause damage. If, however, Rommel succeeded in defeating the opponent, then one would be able to draw necessary conclusions. He (the Fuehrer) would then at once appeal to the Egyptians to throw off the British yoke. In that case he could make such an appeal to the Egyptian people with a clear conscience ; because the German power resources would back up such an appeal.

He (the Fuehrer) had always been very careful about proclamations regarding violent overthrow of foreign powers. With regard to his own home Austria, he had therefore issued a proclamation to the Austrians only on the 12th of March 1938, i.e. one day before the marching in. A politician, who wanted to be taken seriously, could not act otherwise.

He was taking the same attitude in regard to the Arabian question. If Germany had already reached the south Caucasus and if she had half a dozen armoured divisions and a few motorized divisions at its disposal for sending help to the Egyptian and Arabian revolutionaries, he would not have hesitated to issue a proclamation to the Arabs. But now, with Germany still one thousand kilometers away from Arabia, such a proclamation would be irresponsible. He (the Fuehrer) was no Englishman. He did not want to ruin other nations through proclamations. He was not working for the defeat of Egypt and the revolutionary Arabs, but wanted to help them to real success. He did not want to have a diversionary operation carried out by them, as Englishmen would do. Germany would give its own blood for its own cause.

The time for considering an appeal to Egypt under these circumstances could come in three months or only in one to two years, in any case only after Germany would have concentrated enough battle-strength at the gates of Egypt, to ensure the liberation of the country. The same held good for Arabia.

India was endlessly far from Germany. The only possibilities of



communication with India was by land or air. Land communication would be via the Persian Gulf if the southern route was chosen ; in the north, however, it would be via Afghanistan. In any case, the path would be only over the corpse of Russia.

He considered Japan's astonishingly rapid advance to be the historical event of the world of the last half year, by means of which, her armies had practically advanced to the borders of India. Japan's aim was not known to him (the Fuehrer). He did not know whether the Japanese considered, it more important first to relieve their flanks from being threatened by Chiang-Kai-Shek or to seek a rapprochement with him, or whether they first wanted to turn to Australia or India. The defeat of their power in East Asia would possibly lead to the collapse of the British Empire. Such a collapse would naturally mean a great relief for Germany and would spare her a lot of blood. Thereafter, Germany would follow the sequence of events in East Asia with keen interest and it was her wish to help as far as possible from her side. This she would do by hitting the British wherever she found them. In this connection the Fuehrer referred to the submarine battles which would prove to be of indirect help also for the war in East Asia, just like the air attacks on British industrial centres and the war in North Africa. Each defeated English division there would liberate Indian forces, and the Indian forces which were held captive in them could later be put into action for the war of liberation of the Indians.

Germany could not do anything more at the moment. If, however, Germany could gain access to the borders of India like Japan, which would probably take another one to two years, then he (the Fuehrer) would have requested Bose to stay with him, march into India with the German troops and subsequently kindle the revolution against the British.

However, under the circumstances prevailing at the moment he (the Fuehrer) could only advise Bose to bank on the Japanese to project the revolutionary war from the Indian borders into the country itself. As an old revolutionary he could only give Bose the advice to quickly exploit the chance of an internal revolution in India with the enemy pressure from outside. He believed that neither the anti-fascist and anti-national socialist trends of thought of Nehru nor the passive resistance of Gandhi would pay off in the long run. British power could be smashed only if the Indian nation rebelled simultaneously with an external attack. Such an upheaval could be best organised from as close a position to the country concerned as possible. Hence it would be best for Bose to take up his position at such a point which would be nearest to India and from where the strongest military pressure could be exerted on the Britishers. He (the Fuehrer) did not know whether the Japanese actually wanted to exert this pressure. They had not mentioned anything positive to Germany.

In other respects he did not believe that a revolt alone, without



external help, could bring the Indians freedom. As an old revolutionary he knew that with the progress in the field of modern arms even a relatively small number of troops, properly organised and backed by the decision to make full use of their weapons, could keep a big country in check. Only with the help of external military pressure would it be possible for the internal revolutionary forces to hinder reinforcements and transportation of troops by disrupting communication lines and thus contribute to the military collapse.

As matters stood, it would take at least another one to two years before Germany could gain a direct influence in India. Japan's influence, on the other hand, would come about in a few months. Therefore, Bose should negotiate with the Japanese, not only for influencing events in his motherland, but also for restraining the Japanese themselves from committing psychological mistakes by appropriate advice.

However the Fuehrer warned Bose against an air journey which could compel him to a forced landing in British territory. He (Bose) was too important a personality to let his life be endangered by such an experiment. One had to chalk out a safer path for him. A Japanese submarine had at that time arrived in Europe and could take Bose along in case it was returning soon. Otherwise, he (the Fuehrer) would place a German submarine at his disposal, which would take him to Bangkok. With the help of a map the Fuehrer then explained to Bose the probable route of the journey round the Cape of Good Hope and put the duration of the journey at approximately six weeks. In this connection he also explained to Bose how the communication routes from England and America to India and Russia could be cut off by the laying of submarine barricades between Natal and West Africa as also in the vicinity of Madagascar and India.

During the further course of the conversation Bose brought up two more requests. The statements made by the Fuehrer in "Mein Kampf" and on other occasions had been greatly distorted by British propaganda and were being used for propaganda against Germany. Hence he requested the Fuehrer to say something clarifying Germany's attitude towards India at a suitable opportunity. This would clear up things as far as the Indian nation was concerned. Bose further requested afresh for the moral and diplomatic support of Germany for India, so that she need not have to depend on Japan alone.

In his reply to this question the Fuehrer defined India's tasks as follows : Elimination of British influence, avoidance of Russian influence, efforts to come to some sort of agreement with Japan about India's eastern border, and finally internal organisation and reconstruction of India with the purpose of achieving Indian unity. This would be a time-consuming task, which according to the analogy of restoration of German unity would probably take one hundred to two hundred years.



Regarding Bose's comment about the distorted reproduction of his own statements the Fuehrer explained that he had previously taken a stand solely against certain tendencies according to which the subject nations were supposed to build up a united front against the oppressors. In view of the weakness of these nations he considered this to be completely wrong, especially also because the same circles which stood for such a policy in Germany also recommended a sort of passive resistance for the Reich of the Indian pattern, which in any case was a completely wrong doctrine.

About the question of Germany's support for India after the war the Fuehrer remarked that it would hereafter consist of only economic support. Bose should not forget that the power of a country could only be exercised within the range of its sword.

At the time of parting the Fuehrer extended his best wishes to Bose for the success of his journey and plans.

Schmidt.



# BOSE'S INFLUENCE ON THE FORMULATION OF JAPANESE POLICY TOWARD INDIA AND THE INA\*

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**Abstract :** The purpose of this paper is to examine the thesis that Bose's leadership of the INA and Free India Provisional Government in several instances influenced the formulation of Japanese policy toward India and the INA.

Japanese policy toward India and the Indian National Army was a peripheral concern for Japan in Asia in 1941. Japanese military strategists had no real intention of including India in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, though India had appeared in some early versions of the "sphere of influence" in Asia. The Western border of the Sphere was generally conceded to be Burma, and even so there was no consensus on how much of Burma Japan should occupy. There were disagreements on the limits of the Burma offensive as late as January, 1942.

Southeast Asia was a newcomer to map maneuvers in Tokyo, for the Army's traditional orientation was toward North China, out of fear of Russia. India was of even more remote concern when it came to assigning men and material to higher priority campaigns in the Pacific. Southeast Asia was judged to be stabilized in 1942 and there was no sense of urgency in Tokyo regarding policies in occupied Southeast Asia.

For Tokyo India was the object of a propaganda warfare mission. Known initially as the *F Kikan*, the India project in late 1941 was headed by Major Fujiwara Iwaichi and staffed with a handful of dedicated men, including two Hindi-speaking interpreters. As Fujiwara left Imperial General Headquarters on his mission to Bangkok, he was unable to find more than a few travel guides to India in the library of Imperial

\*Paper presented at Netaji Bhawan, Calcutta, on 23 January 1973  
Chairman : Dr. R. C. Majumdar



General Headquarters. Fujiwara from this time on began to feel a sense of commitment to India and the Indian independence movement.

In Southeast Asia he began discussions with two Sikhs, Pritam Singh of the Indian Independence League, and Capt. Mohan Singh of the British Indian Army, taken captive in Malaya. From the conversations among these three men the first Indian National Army was born. It burgeoned with the capture of 45,000 Indian POWs at Singapore, about half of whom volunteered to join the INA to cooperate with Japan in the struggle for Indian independence.

With Fujiwara and Mohan Singh the INA was off to an auspicious start. It was a time of goodwill and harmony between the Japanese liaison agency and the Indian independence movement that was not equalled subsequently. But by March—for a variety of reasons—Fujiwara was replaced by the politically powerful Col. Iwakuro Hideo and a greatly enlarged staff, including two Dietmen.

Iwakuro interpreted the attitude of Tokyo toward the independence movement very differently from Fujiwara. Iwakuro did not see any possibility of answering Indian demands presented in the Bangkok resolution, product of a conference in Bangkok of members of the IIL and INA. Iwakuro sought to control Mohan Singh by using Rash Behari Bose, longtime political exile in Japan. The result was a head-on confrontation between Iwakuro and Rash Behari on the one hand and Mohan Singh on the other. The clash dealt the INA a telling blow, for Mohan Singh was placed under house arrest for the duration of the war. The INA entered a period of desuetude when it lacked strong direction and leadership. For the time being Tokyo had no further interest in the INA and relied on Iwakuro, an Army specialist in intelligence, to continue the propaganda effort to alienate Indian opinion from Britain in whatever ways he could. Had this situation remained, there is little evidence that policy planners in Tokyo would have taken further note of the INA, or that greater stress would have been placed on propaganda efforts with Indian opinion.



It was not until the arrival of Netaji in Southeast Asia in June, 1943 that the INA and independence movement revived and precipitated some reassessment of Japan's relative neglect of the INA and the independence movement. Bose had been in Berlin since early 1941 following his eluding of British authorities and escape to Germany through Afghanistan. Authorities in Tokyo learned of Bose and his significance from several sources.

As early as April, 1941 Consul General Okazaki in Calcutta cabled Foreign Minister Matsuoka, describing the Forward Bloc as a radical Bengali party working for independence, and suggesting establishing contact with Bose in Berlin. The communique went so far as to suggest secret Japanese support of the party with weapons.

Major Fujiwara in his dealings with the INA and IIL had often heard about Bose, and the universally favourable reports led him to suggest the possibility of bringing Bose from Germany to Asia, where he would unite and lead the whole independence movement in Southeast Asia. This proposal was among those Fujiwara made to two generals from Tokyo Headquarters in Kuala Lumpur in January of 1942.

In October 1941, Colonel Yamamoto, military attache in Berlin, received a cable from Tokyo Headquarters. It ordered him to "make a direct observation of a man named Bose and report". Bose was at the time under personal "protection" of the German Foreign Ministry, so Yamamoto needed official permission to meet Bose. His first appeal was discouraging. The second request to meet Bose was made in the name of Ambassador Oshima, and this time permission was granted. They had an hour's conversation with Bose, during which he impressed them with his revolutionary *elan*<sup>1</sup>. This was the first of many visits by Bose to the Japanese Embassy. When the Pacific War exploded and Japan overran Malaya and Singapore Bose was elated. He asked Oshima to use his good offices to secure Bose's passage to Asia.

The Japanese Foreign Ministry, learning of Bose's presence in Berlin and his political significance from sources in both



India and Germany, refrained from any positive policy regarding Bose during 1941. And when war erupted in the Pacific, the initiative obviously lay not with the Foreign Ministry but with the military.

Between January and May, 1942, Prime Minister Tojo in the Diet made several pronouncements regarding Japan's policy toward India. He said, "It has been decided to strike a decisive blow against British power and military establishment in India", and "Without the liberation of India there can be no real mutual prosperity in Greater East Asia."<sup>2</sup> These were very general policy statements made for propaganda purposes, with no hint of implementation on Japan's part. And an Imperial Conference decision in November, 1941 had already called for separation of India and Australia from Britain and stimulation of the Indian independence movement.

The decision to invite Bose to Tokyo to evaluate his usefulness for Japanese policy was reached on April 17, 1942, jointly by the Army, Navy, and Foreign Ministries.<sup>3</sup> Bose did not actually arrive in Tokyo until May, 1943, over a year later. Ambassador Oshima in Berlin had received no instructions from Tokyo regarding India since hostilities broke out in the Pacific. He had a feeling the German Foreign Ministry would not let Bose go in any case. They were guarding Bose like a tiger cub.<sup>4</sup> His propaganda broadcasts were judged to be affecting India and Britain. Furthermore, in the event of a German defeat Bose would be valuable for bargaining purposes, since Britain would be anxious to get hold of Bose. Bose mentioned this possibility to Oshima and to other Indians in Berlin.<sup>5</sup>

Neither was there any evidence of Tokyo's eagerness to have Bose in Asia. Three telegrams were sent from the Embassy in Berlin before IGHQ sent back the bureaucratic reply: "under consideration". And the Foreign Ministry advised Oshima that he should make no definite commitment to Bose. There was more interest in Bose within IGHQ than in the Foreign Ministry, and the two had not yet reached agreement



on the possible value of Bose to Japan. For the Foreign Ministry the broader problem of a tripartite policy declaration on India took precedence over the immediate question of Bose.

There was also the problem of a safe routing for Bose to Asia. Bose hoped for a polar route, but Tojo refused this suggestion. Military Attache Col. Yamamoto had a feeling Tokyo was prevaricating.

Another reason for Tokyo's hesitation was the presence in Tokyo of another revolutionary named Bose. Why go to the trouble of risking the hazards of bringing another man all the way from Berlin? Furthermore, General Arisue in the intelligence bureau, IGHQ, was concerned about the relationship between the two Boses. When Arisue broached with Rash Behari the question of what would happen if Subhas were brought to Asia, he was relieved at the reply, "I would step down".

Only at the end of 1942 with the crisis of the first INA was Tokyo convinced of the need for a stronger leader than Rash Behari. At last the Indian requests were beginning to make sense to IGHQ. And for Bose the German fiasco at Stalingrad made it more imperative than ever that he leave for Asia.

In January 1943 Oshima approached Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, with the suggestion that Bose be sent to Asia. There was no immediate approval. Oshima then turned to Hitler directly, and this time got consent to Bose's departure.<sup>6</sup> Travel arrangements were made and Bose was transferred from German to Japanese submarine and plane, landing in Tokyo May 16, 1943.

In Tokyo Bose had one aim, an obsession : to meet Tojo. Yamamoto had arranged meetings with Army Chief of Staff Sugiyama, Foreign Minister Shigemitsu, and Army and Navy Ministers. Bose's opening words to Sugiyama took the general by surprise : "The war will end in victory for Japan ! Will Japan send soldiers to India or not ? We are going to fight our way to India step by step. If we don't push on with



determination we won't be able to achieve independence."7\* Sugiyama, despite his interest in India and two years' experience there, could only respond by giving Bose a briefing on the current military situation. Yamamoto then guided Bose around Tokyo for ten days, much to Bose's frustration.

Why was Tojo putting Bose off? First, there were many more pressing military problems than India. Second, a group in the Operations Bureau of IGHQ took a dim view of India and the INA. Some felt there was no proof of Bose's propaganda impact in India. Furthermore, Tojo was a man of strong prejudices, and the crisis of the first INA had been nothing but a headache so far as Tojo was concerned.<sup>8</sup> There was no need to meet another Indian, even if he had just come from Berlin.

It was persuasion by Sugiyama and Shigemitsu which finally prevailed on Tojo to meet with Bose on June 10. The magic of Bose enchanted Tojo immediately. It had been the same with Sugiyama, Shigemitsu and nearly everyone Bose met in Japan. Not only Bose's words and passion but his eyes and voice enthralled Tojo. The meeting was brief, but Tojo agreed to another. Bose posed the question: "Can Japan give unconditional help to Indian independence? I would like to confirm that there are no strings attached to Japanese aid". Tojo immediately agreed, more as a gesture for goodwill than as a matter of realistic judgment. When Bose prodded further, "Can the Japanese Army push its operations into India proper?" This time Tojo was unable to answer as unequivocally. But Bose was grateful that he had made a friend of the most powerful man in the government".<sup>9</sup>

Tojo was prepared to make public his support of Bose and the INA. He did so in the Diet on June 16. "We firmly resolve that Japan will do everything possible to help Indian independence. I am convinced the day of Indian freedom and prosperity is not far off," Tojo announced.<sup>10</sup> Three days later

\* See Appendix for an English translation of extracts from 'Subhas Chandra Bose and Japan', Asian Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Japan, Tokyo 1953.—Ed.



Bose held a press conference at which he expressed his gratitude at Tojo's Diet speech. Bose was given radio facilities and broadcast appeals to India from Tokyo.

Arriving in Southeast Asia in July, Bose assumed leadership of the IIL and INA. He announced his intention to organise a Free India Provisional Government. And Tojo, visiting Singapore in July, reviewed INA troops with Bose. His presence at Bose's side seemed another proof of Japan's good faith. Tojo addressed the gathering, repeating the assurances that Japan had no territorial, military or economic ambitions in India, and that Japan would extend all-out aid for Indian liberation.<sup>11</sup>

Bose's arrival in Southeast Asia produced another shift in Japanese policy : the *Iwakuro Kikan* was reorganized briefly under Col. Yamamoto, whom Bose had known in Berlin and Tokyo. But Bose complained about Yamamoto to Tojo, and following this brief interlude there was another reorganization, this time under Lt. Gen. Isoda Saburo. This appointment indicated a shift in emphasis to military matters in liaison with the INA. It also meant a higher-ranking liaison chief in the new *Hikari Kikan*.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, Isoda was a benign, mild-mannered general who might be able to placate Bose as Yamamoto was unable to do. Bose also requested from Tojo and got the use of a Japanese plane.

On October 21, 1943 Bose inaugurated the Provisional Government of Free India, together with its cabinet. Bose had already been assured through the *Hikari Kikan* of recognition by the Japanese Government which came only two days after formation of the FIPG. Germany, Italy and several other nations followed suit. The following day the FIPG declared war on the U. S. and Britain.

In November Bose was a delegate to the Greater East Asia Conference in Tokyo. The conference represented a propaganda effort to spread goodwill among the leaders of Greater East Asia. Bose in his speech on the struggle for Indian liberation harked back to Japan's victory over Russia in 1905.

One of Bose's aims in going to Tokyo was to ask the



Japanese Government to turn over to the FIPG the captured Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Indian Ocean. They were symbolic as a place of exile for Indian prisoners of the British. Furthermore, in order to be a genuine Government in international law the FIPG needed territory. In addition, the Andamans and Nicobars would presage liberation of all India, Bose said to Tojo. Tojo demurred, saying that the islands were of strategic importance to the Navy, which would never agree. But Tojo consented to announce that the islands would be ceded to the FIPG in the near future.<sup>13</sup> Tojo kept his word and made the announcement of the transfer on November 6. In fact, actual transfer was never made ; ultimate jurisdiction remained with the Japanese Navy, though Bose sent a chief commissioner. The Navy, however, refused to have an INA contingent on the islands.

Another Japanese commander Field Marshal Count Terauchi, of the Southern Army, met with Bose soon after his arrival in Southeast Asia. Terauchi explained to Bose that Japanese forces were preparing a campaign into India. The burden of the battle Terauchi explained, would be borne by the Japanese Army. India would be freed of British domination, then handed over to the Indian troops as an independent territory. What the Japanese wanted of Bose was personal cooperation. Terauchi was clearly less impressed with Bose's charisma than any other high-ranking Japanese who met him.

Bose's reaction to Terauchi's briefing was annoyance, at this time and later when INA strategy was being planned for the Imphal campaign. Bose made it clear to Terauchi that the only role acceptable to the INA in an Indian campaign would be as spearhead of the advance. Indian freedom had to be won by Indians, and "The first drop of blood shed on Indian soil must be that of a soldier of the INA", Bose asserted.<sup>14</sup>

The story of the Japanese decision to invade Imphal is too complex to relate here. Hundreds of hours were spent in discussions by staff officers both in Tokyo and Burma before operation "U" was launched. Genesis of the plan dated from 1942, but at that time it was rejected. In 1943 the plan was



again postponed. By 1944, when Japan's military prospects were much dimmer and supply and other problems were insurmountable, the decision was made. There were of course some military imperatives : defense of Burma against Allied counter-attack and disruption of supply lines to Chungking. But the campaign was also launched out of desperation, out of a hope that Japan could somehow achieve one battle victory as a much-needed bolster to morale at home.

The other major consideration was Bose and the INA. Col. Iwakuro had already advised postponement of the campaign until four conditions could be guaranteed after the monsoon ; (1) the anti-British mood in India should continue ; (2) pro-Japanese sentiment should be fostered within India ; (3) supply preparations should be completed ; and (4) Japan should be able to use the INA with confidence.<sup>15</sup> Generals Katakura and Terauchi also advised postponement.

Indian opinion was a major concern now to IGHQ, as it was judged British propaganda would attempt to divert nationalist animosity from Britain to Japan once Japanese forces crossed the border into India. These considerations, plus Bose's charismatic leadership, gave Bose what bargaining power he had with Tokyo.

Tokyo for all these reasons became receptive to Bose's requests and willing in late 1943 to again contemplate a campaign into northeast India. The motives were political as well as military. Bose injected a non-military influence into strategic calculations of both Tojo and IGHQ. The Imphal campaign became Japan's "political campaign" of Pacific War.

The role of the INA in the campaign was a point of contention between Bose and Japanese staff officers. At IGHQ, Southern Army Headquarters and Burma Area Army Headquarters there was some opposition to the idea of using the INA as a fighting unit. There were doubts about the combat effectiveness of the INA, about possible trouble between the INA and Japanese troops once Indian soil were reached. The feeling was that the INA should be used in guerrilla fighting and intelligence and other special services.



There was also objection to Bose's request that INA units cross the border first. But BAA commander General Kawabe liked Bose. Furthermore, he felt that if all Bose's requests were rejected Bose would be irritated. This would mean Japan would gain no political advantage from INA cooperation. It was a delicate balance,<sup>16</sup> Bose's wish that INA troops be allowed to fight directly under Indian commanders in units of regimental size was also granted, though the INA was ultimately under Japanese command.

Another problem for the Japanese was Bose's broadcast of the statement that before the end of the year INA troops would stand on Indian soil. Japanese liaison officials asked Japanese correspondents to delete the statement. A compromise was reached whereby Bose broadcast the statement in the original, but Japanese broadcasts censored the phrase from the Japanese version.

General Kawabe felt a strong sense of responsibility to Bose and met him several times throughout the Imphal campaign. On March 18 as the campaign was going well Kawabe told Bose they would next meet in India. On April 6 Kawabe warned Bose not to allow British propaganda to make use of him. The next day the two men agreed to drop the word "Provisional" from Free India Provisional Government. The Bose-Kawabe dialogue continued into May, when Bose again requested that the size of the INA be expanded and greater efforts be made for victory. Kawabe was pained that there was nothing further he could do for Bose. Kawabe's sense of responsibility toward Bose and the independence movement delayed even more importantly the decision to retreat. The one request from Bose that the Burma Area Army Staff was unable to take seriously was Bose's request that the Rani of Jhansi regiment be sent to the front.<sup>17</sup>

Bose on his part refused the Japanese Order of First Merit of the Rising Sun during a trip to Tokyo, saying that he would be happy to accept when the day of Indian independence arrived.

The problems the Imphal offensive encountered were



legion, and it became one of the worst disasters of the war for Japan. Five Japanese generals were transferred as a result. But Japanese commanding officers were psychologically stalemated in attempting to reach the decision to retreat. At a critical meeting between Generals Kawabe and Mutaguchi of the 15th Army, the two men looked at each other, each waiting for the other to intone the inevitable. Neither spoke. It was not only reluctance to admit defeat but also to disappoint Bose that left Kawabe tongue-tied.<sup>18</sup> The June 7 meeting therefore ended indecisively.

Even after the Imphal disaster was over Bose continued to reiterate his faith in Japanese victory. As leader of a revolutionary movement he could not destroy the hopes which sustained it.

Japan in defeat made a final gesture to Netaji. This was to give him a plane three days after Japan's surrender. It was the plane Bose hoped would take him to Manchuria and Russia, but which ended its flight and Bose's career in Taiwan.

Bose was always careful in his dealings with the Japanese to guard against being used by the Japanese and having his requests ignored. There is in any cooperative relationship the question of which side gains the greater advantage. Some authors, mostly British, have referred to the INA as traitors, collaborators and puppets. I will not get involved here in the many considerations—some of them obvious in any case—which have led British authors to make these charges.

The point with which I wish to conclude is that the INA was one of many Japanese—fostered or trained independence and volunteer armies in Southeast Asia. The INA was the only one of these armies to engage in a major joint campaign with the Japanese Army. Japanese officers had been giving military training to Burmese nationalists since 1940. But in 1944 the Japanese were not willing to see Burmese troops put into action along with the INA. The anomalous fact is that, though Japan regarded the INA as basically a political liaison problem, the INA was the only Japanese fostered army the Japanese were willing to accord actual military status.



Similarly, though many of the measures Japan took toward the FIPG were taken as part of propaganda warfare (recognition of the FIPG, sending a minister to the FIPG with no papers of accreditation, transfer of the Andaman and the Nicobar Islands) and were more symbolic than substantive, Japan accorded the INA and the FIPG a high place in the ranking of Southeast Asian independence movements. It may be argued that part of the reason was that the FIPG and INA were not in occupied India, unlike the rest of Southeast Asia. But it is my contention that an equally cogent reason was the charisma and undisputed leadership of Bose in the Indian independence movement in Southeast Asia, and the high esteem in which he was held by all high-ranking Japanese who met him.



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## APPENDIX

## SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE AND JAPAN

*4th Section, Asian Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs,  
Government of Japan, August 1956.*

(The following is a free English translation of selected extracts from the above publication. Facts and interpretations as well as the general manner and style of the original Japanese version have been retained. Ed.)

On August 18, a bomber plane of the Imperial Japanese Army crashed shortly after take-off from Taipei airport. The crew and other occupants of the plane were thrown out ; some were dead and others received severe injuries. Among those severely injured was Subhas Chandra Bose of India. He was removed to the Taipei Army Hospital where he soon succumbed to his injuries. He was 49 at the time of his death. Mr. Habibur Rahman, a close associate of Bose, was present when Bose breathed his last. The mortal remains of the great leader were carried by Rahman to Tokyo where they are preserved till today.

*Bose in Berlin—Negotiations with Japan*

Bose arrived in Berlin on March 28, 1941. The previous year Japan had joined the Axis powers. And in April 1941 she concluded a non-aggression pact with Soviet Russia. In June, tension on Germany's western front mounted and on the 23rd she declared war on Russia. Italy followed suit and also declared war against Russia. To counter this, Great Britain declared her support for Russia. At this point Bose lost all hope of Russian assistance to him (because Russia and Great Britain were now allies).

At his meeting with Hitler, Bose tried to get Hitler's frank opinion about the path India had to follow. Hitler having himself come to power through a revolution and being always on guard against a counter-revolution, told Bose that a few thousand well-armed soldiers were enough to subdue millions of unarmed revolutionaries. Therefore, he added, a change in the internal situation was unlikely without external pressure (through armed intervention). It was at this point that Bose decided what he should do for his country's freedom to fight British colonialism by joining hands with the enemies of Britain. The German Foreign Office at first viewed Bose's mission with doubt. But when Bose made clear to them



what he intended to do, their attitude changed. He was treated thereafter as a state guest. He was well protected. Among other things, facilities were given to Bose to beam anti-British propaganda to his people. Bose built up the nucleus of an army by recruiting the best Indians available in Europe. He was assisted in this by the Germans. Indian soldiers who were captured by Germans in the African campaign were asked to volunteer to serve in the army Bose was building up to fight the British. Those selected were given training in the European front. Bose himself selected most of the soldiers who agreed to serve in his army. In the beginning there was only one battalion ; later it was expanded to a regiment. It was equipped with German weapons.

During those days Bose had with him a band of young and dedicated men whose enthusiasm would have won admiration of all. Among them were Mr. Hasan who later became Bose's secretary and Mr. Swami. Both travelled with him to Japan. Bose at this time was convinced of the following developments :

- a) that the end of the war would see the disintegration of the British Empire ;
- b) the U.S. might escape war damage, but the British would suffer most ;
- c) Canada and other English possessions would gradually come under American influence.

In July 1941 Japan concluded a joint defence pact with Indochina. Just at this time England, USA and Holland froze Japanese interests and in October oil supplies to Japan were stopped. British forces, consisting mainly of Indian soldiers, were deployed in areas controlled by the British. Bose was eagerly watching the developments in the east. His aim was to open a second front against the British in the east—along the Indian frontier and he was eagerly waiting for an opportune moment. Towards the end of October 1941 Bose had a meeting with the Japanese Ambassador, Oshima. Colonel Yamamoto Bin was also present (Yamamoto later became Chief of the Hikari Kikan, a Japanese army agency which backed the Indian National Army). Neither Oshima nor Yamamoto had met Bose before. Oshima, of course, had asked the German Foreign Office for permission to meet Bose and Yamamoto had orders from General Headquarters (Tokyo) to meet Bose. Bose later met the Japanese Ambassador frequently and gained his confidence. Their acquaintance continued till December 1942 when Oshima, on orders from Tokyo, returned to Japan.

Reports about Bose's activities had reached both the Japanese Government and the Army. Bose received in Berlin the news of Japan's declaration of war against the U. S., Britain and Australia (December 8, 1941). It occurred to him then that he might as well seek Japan's help in his struggle to free India from the British. On Christmas eve Bose met Oshima



and Yamamoto at the embassy. It was at this meeting that he expressed his desire to shift his activities to Japan. Till then neither Oshima nor Yamamoto had anticipated this. The Japanese envoy had no information from Tokyo about the Indian problem nor had he known of any plan of the German Foreign office to send Bose out. Unable to help Bose in any positive manner, Oshima wished him well in his efforts and promised that he would pass on his request to Tokyo.

Meanwhile, Japanese forces had entered Burma (mid-January 1942) and were pressing hard on Singapore. On February 15 Singapore fell. The news of Singapore's fall further stimulated Bose's desire to come to Japan and seek her help in freeing his country. Yet there was no reply from Tokyo to Oshima's letter. Of course there were other problems too. The German Foreign Office which was trying to exploit Bose's talents refused to listen to Oshima. Oshima applied for permission to meet Hitler and got it. When he explained Bose's plans to Hitler, the Fuehrer readily agreed with Oshima that it was better for Bose to shift his activities to South-east Asia now that his country's (Japan) armies had overrun the area. The second problem was whether Bose would get enough support in Tokyo for his activities. On this Oshima had contacted Tokyo many times but had not received any firm answer. Finally, Tokyo replied to Oshima that in principle it had no objection to Bose's visit to Japan. The third problem was to provide Bose a safe means of transport to Japan. Communication between Germany and Japan was impossible during those days. Passage by boat was ruled out ; and it was decided to use a plane belonging to the Lufthansa Company to airlift Bose from Germany to Japan via the Soviet Union. Tojo objected to this on the ground that this would amount to a breach of trust with the Soviet Union. An attempt was made by both Yamamoto and Bose to get an Italian plane but this also did not work. Finally, the choice fell on a submarine. The idea of using a submarine for the purpose had occurred once before but neither Germany nor Japan had any submarines to spare for such a long journey at that time. When all other means failed, naturally it was decided to use a submarine. Germany agreed to carry Bose upto a certain unknown point in the east and asked that a Japanese submarine be pressed into service thenceforward. After a series of exchanges with his government Oshima finally obtained the approval of Tokyo to the plan and communicated it to Bose. Bose agreed to sail with Yamamoto (who was carrying the diplomatic bag) in the submarine. In February 1943 Bose left Berlin with Abid Hasan.

### *Indian Independence League*

In December 1940 three Indians who had escaped from the British prison in Hongkong sought refuge with the Japanese Army in Canton and



were later brought to Kobe secretly. These three had been sought by the British Police for their anti-British activities ; their objective was to establish contacts with Indians in Malaya, Berlin and elsewhere. The Japanese Imperial Headquarters approved of this and helped in transporting these men secretly to Bangkok. (Mitsui Yama Maru). At Bangkok these men were sheltered by the Japanese Military Attache (Tamura) at a secret place. In Bangkok Amar Singh became the head of the Indian Independence League and he was assisted by Pritam Singh. The aim of the IIL was to lead the liberation movement of India. Members of the Sikh community living in Hongkong, Shanghai, Tokyo and Berlin were all attached to this secret society. The Japanese Imperial Headquarters established contact with the IIL in July 1941. At about the same time Yamamoto was sent to Berlin to contact Bose and report to the Headquarters about his activities. A liaison group headed by a certain Major Fujiwara was despatched to Bangkok by the Imperial Headquarters in October, 1941. Bangkok at this time was full of foreign intelligence agents—English, Japanese, American, Chinese and German. One of the agents working here for the British Army Intelligence was Lieutenant Colonel Gill who later distinguished himself in the INA. On October 10 the F group ( Japanese Intelligence group) contacted the President of IIL. The contact established by this group with the IIL was a step in the Japanese move to assist the Indian independence movement. At this time the F Group and the IIL worked hard to propagate the objectives of the League among the Indian soldiers in the British Army.

On November 28, 1941 the "F" agency received a report from the Japanese Military Attache in Bangkok about the failure of negotiations. He was asked to expect declaration of war in the second week of December and to work under the over-all command of Field Marshal Terauchi. He was also told that his direct operations would henceforth come under the command of the 25th Army led by General Yamashita. He contacted the IIL hurriedly and chalked out last-minute plans. The memoranda containing the plans of each party were exchanged between Pritam Singh and Military Attache Tamura. The two parties agreed on following points :

(1) To co-operate with each other for the achievement of India's independence.

(2) The IIL would fight the British power with a view to achieving complete independence. IIL would expect over-all support from Japan. Japan was not to ask for any kind of concessions (political, economic, territorial, military etc.)

(3) Japan would extend protection to all Indians fighting for the independence of India without regard for race, caste, etc.

(4) IIL would undertake the following activities as soon as war broke out between England and Japan : (a) march with the Japanese army to



South Siam and thence to Malaya : expand its strength in these areas through propaganda among Indian soldiers of the British India Army ; work for harmony between these soldiers and the Japanese Army ; (b) organize a Volunteer Force from among officers of the British India Army and other Indians staying in Malaya ; (c) depending on the situation, extend its operations to other areas in the Far East.

(5) The Japanese Imperial Army would assist the IIL as mentioned hereunder ; (a) the army would allow, except under emergency, full freedom of action to the IIL ; (b) F agency would work for liaison between the Japanese Army and the IIL ; (c) the Japanese Army would not consider Indian citizens in occupied areas to be enemy citizens ; their life, property and freedom would be fully respected ; (d) the Japanese Army would allow the IIL to freely use its broadcasting stations in Tokyo, occupied areas and Bangkok to beam its propaganda ; (e) the Japanese Army would put IIL in touch with Bose in Berlin ; (f) funds and other resources necessary for the activities of the IIL would be furnished by the Japanese Army. The Japanese Army would not object to its collection of funds from Indians in occupied areas.

### *I. N. A.*

After war was declared by Japan against the U.S. and Great Britain, the "F" agency plunged into its operations and penetrated into Malaya ; the IIL shifted its activities to southern Siam. On December 14, 1941 a battalion of the British Indian Army surrendered to the Japanese with its English Commander. And at this stage Captain Mohan Singh who played an important role in the INA came into limelight. It was through Mohan Singh's efforts that the INA was organized as a military wing of the IIL. The name "INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY" was also suggested by Mohan Singh.

When the Burma campaign began, a contingent of the IIL and INA moved there with the "F" group. At the same time the Japanese intensified their attacks against the British, the INA also intensified its propaganda among soldiers of the British Indian Army in Singapore. On 17 February, 1942, Singapore fell. And captured Indian soldiers were told about the INA and its mission. The majority of them willingly agreed to serve in the INA and the Japanese Army true to its promise did not consider them as prisoners of war.

### *Tokyo Conference of IIL*

In March 1942, Indians working for their country's freedom in different parts of Asia assembled in Tokyo under the leadership of Rash



Behari Bose. Invitations had been sent to the following Indians to join the conference. Pritam Singh, Menon, Raghavan, Swami Satyanand and Iyer (IIL), Capt. Mohan Singh, Major Gill and Capt. Akram (INA) Asman (Shanghai) and Khan (Hong-Kong). The conference was held at Sauno Hotel. Swami Satyanand, Pritam Singh, Iyer, and Akram met with an accident on their flight to Tokyo and they were all killed. The conference was conducted without them. The delegates to the conference had an interview with Tojo. The Congress decided to meet again in the middle of May in Bangkok. The Tokyo conference brought into the open for the first time differences between the mission which had come from Southeast Asia and the Indian group in Japan. The group from Southeast Asia believed that the delegates representing the Tokyo group were under strong Japanese influence and therefore had lost their representative character. The Tokyo group regarded the attitude of the Southeast Asia group as outrageous ; to them the Southeast Asia group was after all a group of deserters from the British Army, who had earlier sworn loyalty to their rulers. After the conference was over Capt. Mohan Singh returned to Singapore and resumed his earlier activities connected with the INA. Pritam Singh had lost his life in the plane accident and this was a great blow to the IIL. Meanwhile Major Fujiwara of the "F" agency was transferred to a new post and for some time there continued to be an atmosphere of indecision and uncertainty. He was soon replaced by Colonel Iwaguro.

### *Iwaguro Agency - Bangkok Meeting*

Even after Singapore had fallen, the top officers of the Japanese Army and the Imperial Headquarters were not sure as to what to do with the question of bringing Bose to the east and putting him at the head of the INA. Some of them argued that Rash Behari Bose might as well be put at the head of the INA. Finally it was decided to put R. B. Bose temporarily at the head of the INA till S. C. Bose's arrival in the east. And the new agency—the Iwaguro Agency which had replaced the "F" agency—created for liaison between the Japanese Army and the INA—decided to bring S. C. Bose to the east and place him at the head of the activities of the INA. (The Agency was reorganized into 4 departments—political department, publicity department, military department and propaganda department).

In May 1942 the Bangkok meeting was convened. Indians residing in the countries of the Far East sent their representatives to this meeting. Rash Behari Bose was in the chair ; Sahay represented the Indian Group in Japan. S. C. Bose sent a congratulatory message to this meeting and the message was read out. The substance of the message was that his personal experience had convinced him that Japan, Italy and Germany were sworn



enemies of British imperialism ; yet independence can come only through the efforts of Indians themselves. India's freedom would mean the rout of British Imperialism, his message said. This meeting elected members of the executive committee of the Independence Movement.

From Japan R. B. Bose was chosen ; from the INA Capt. Mohan Singh, from Malaya, Raghavan and Menon. The chief of the committee was R. B. Bose. It was also decided to continue the activities of the IIL through a Representative Council, local committees and local branches. The decision-making body was composed of representatives from committees and branches. The headquarters of the IIL continued to be at Bangkok.

In a subsequent meeting a decision was taken on some sixty odd points. One of the most important among these was to seek the financial help of the Japanese Government to establish a Provisional Government of Free India and to repay this after the country had attained independence. It was also decided to have mutually good relations with the Japanese Army after independence. A note containing these points was sent to Tokyo for comments from the Japanese government and Army Headquarters. The topnotchers at Army Headquarters regarded some of the plans of the group as too adventurous and stated in an abstract way that Japan would commit herself only to the extent of giving such aid as may be necessary for the attainment of independence. This naturally caused some disappointment among the Indians. Gradually a rift developed between the Indian group and the Japanese. Particularly when S. C. Bose became Chief of the Provisional Government of Free India and assumed leadership of the INA, the differences between the Indian Group and the Japanese developed further. Meanwhile, discontent within the group against R. B. Bose's leadership gained strength. Some even thought that he was just the protege of the Japanese and that the latter were exploiting Indians for their own ends. Such resentment finally resulted in a revolt of a group of leaders headed by Capt. Mohan Singh within the INA. (November 1942). As a consequence, Capt. Mohan Singh and Col. Gill were both arrested by the Japanese and the Indian Army was disbanded. However in 1943 a new Indian Army was organized, put under the command of Lt. Col. Bhonsle, who held this post till the final dissolution of the army. Following this incident the Japanese also changed their attitude towards the Indian group and reorganized their liaison agency. Iwaguro was transferred from his post and Major Fujiwara was brought back.

At the same time preparations were made to set up a new liaison body—the Hikari Kikan—under the leadership of Col. Yamamoto. The revolt of the army officers within the INA also created doubts as to the efficiency of R. B. Bose's leadership. Hence serious thought was given to bringing S. C. Bose to the east as early as possible.



*S. C. Bose comes to the East*

On 20 April 1943, a Japanese submarine sailed from Penang towards an unknown point (in the Indian Ocean) off the coast of South Africa. Its mission was to take on board persons and articles brought by a German submarine. Among the persons to be taken on board was S. C. Bose who had left Berlin in the middle of February 1943. On May 6 the submarine reached Saban Island and landed Bose and his secretary Hasan. He was lodged there in a house arranged by the Japanese Navy. He was visibly moved when he saw Col. Yamamoto who had come to receive him. Yamamoto had recently been made Chief of Hikari Kikan, a liaison agency between S. C. Bose and the Japanese Army. After some delay the Imperial Headquarters despatched a plane to fly Bose from Saban to Tokyo. On May 11 the plane left Saban and reached Tokyo on May 16 (via Penang, Saigon, Manila, Taipei and Mamamatsun). In Tokyo arrangements had been made for his stay at the Teikoku Hotel (Imperial Hotel).

*Hikari Kikan*

As soon as Yamamoto took over charge from his predecessor he braced himself to the task of re-organizing the liaison body. The political and propaganda sections were abolished. Matters relating to these were to be handled henceforth by the Provisional Government of India. The name of the liaison body was changed to Hikari Kikan and it assumed more and more military responsibilities. The headquarters of the Hikari Kikan was at Singapore.

*Bose in Tokyo*

After his arrival in Tokyo Bose was eager to meet the Japanese leaders and discuss with them the future course of action. But it was somewhat disappointing to him that only junior officers came to him for talks—junior officers from the Army, Navy and the Foreign Office. After some time, however, he had the opportunity to meet General Sugiyama (Chief of General Staff), the Navy Minister, Head of the Army Division and Shigemitsu Mamoru, the Foreign Minister. These meetings were not fruitful. They invariably began and ended with just mutual greetings. At his meeting with Sugiyama, Bose expressed his keen desire to lead an army into India—by first taking Chittagong. Just then the headquarters had also been thinking of opening a front near the Indian frontier and Bose's suggestion had a healthy effect on them.

Bose went on an inspection tour for 10 days—and during this tour he



visited schools, factories, hospitals, military establishments and the naval yard at Yokosuka. (Bose, it was suggested, was taking a look at Japan's actual strength). Despite Yamamoto's efforts to get an interview for Bose with Hideki Tojo there was no sign on the part of the latter to spare time for this. Out of sheer frustration he asked the Head of the Special Division of the General Staff to relieve him. The reasons for Tojo's lukewarm attitude were ; (I) the Army did not consider the Indian problem as important (II) Tojo himself had taken a pessimistic view of the problem particularly after the Bangkok conference and the revolt of INA officers. When finally he met Bose it was already the middle of 1943 ( June 10, 1943). But his prejudices, it is said, disappeared after his first meeting with S. C. Bose. Bose met Tojo again on June 14 and exchanged views with him on the political situation. Mamoru Shigemitsu the Foreign Minister was also present at this meeting. On 16 June Bose visited the Imperial Diet and heard Tojo's declaration on the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere. On June 19 Bose held his first press conference in Tokyo and there were about sixty reporters in all. In his press conference Bose emphasized the following points :

(a) He would avoid a repetition of the kind of failure in the period preceding the second world war when Indian leaders were duped by English politicians :

(b) He was confident that the Axis powers would ultimately win the war. He expressed his thanks to these powers for their positive support to the Indian independence movement ;

(c) He would follow up the non-co-operation movement with armed struggle ;

(d) He was greatly satisfied with Tojo's declaration in Parliament.

The following is the substance of the statement which he issued to the press :

'For many long years, British jails in India and Burma had been my residence. But the fact that today I am standing before you in the heart of Nippon instead of sitting idly in a prison house in India is symbolic of the new movement that is now sweeping over my country.

It was in accordance with the will of my countrymen that I left home and homeland more than two years ago and whatever I had done since then was also in accordance with their will.

During the last World War our leaders had been bluffed and deceived by the wily British politicians. That was why we took the vow more than 20 years ago never again to be deceived by them.

For more than 20 years my generation had striven for freedom and eagerly awaited the hour that has now struck—the hour that is for the Indian people, the dawn of freedom.

We know very well that such an opportunity will not come again for



another hundred years and we are therefore determined to make the fullest use of it.

Gentlemen ! We have so often heard that the war is being waged for freedom and democracy. But you can very well imagine what my countrymen think of those powers that talk of freedom and democracy and deny the same to one-fifth of the human race—the powers that reply to the demand for liberty by terror and brutality and by the massacre of unarmed men, women and children. British Imperialism has meant for India moral degradation, cultural ruin, economic impoverishment and political enslavement.

Is it any wonder, therefore, that the Indian people have at last solemnly resolved to end the British yoke? The present world conflict means for the Indian people the struggle between the forces that want to maintain the status quo and those that are determined to overthrow it.

Can any one blame us if in such a conflict our sympathy lies with those powers that stand for the change—for the New Order? And when these powers support our demand for freedom it is but natural that sympathy for them should deepen into enthusiastic support.

The Tripartite Powers have rendered the greatest help to India's struggle by waging war against our eternal foe. And they have earned our lasting gratitude by offering us not only sympathy but active support and assistance.

Nevertheless, it is our duty to pay for our liberty with our own blood. The freedom that we shall win, through our sacrifice and exertions, we shall be able to preserve with our own strength.

We therefore, feel strongly that we should actively participate in the war against our common foe.

The enemy that has drawn the sword must be fought with the sword. Civil disobedience must develop into armed struggle. And only when the Indian people receive the baptism of fire on a large scale will they qualify for their freedom.

Since I left my country two years ago I have travelled widely and have learnt to study world problems from an objective point of view. I have also known something about the domestic situation in Germany, Italy and Japan. I am aware of the difficulties that these countries are facing and I also know the source of their strength...

You are all eager to know what my countrymen think of Japan and her people. Japan was the first powerful Asian country which stopped aggressive western forces in the nineteenth century. The point of departure for Asia was the defeat of Russia at the hands of Japan in 1905.... A powerful Japan is necessary today as in the past for the recovery of Asia. It is true that the image of Japan in our minds has suffered a little after the Sino-Japanese incident. But in the changed context of the world today, Japan



is not only fighting our enemy but is bringing great pressure on Britain and USA. On the other hand, Chiang-Kai-Shek is giving full assistance to Britain so that she may perpetuate her stay in these countries. We do not bother our heads about the theoretical hairsplitting regarding the question of freedom for India. What we aspire for is economic and political freedom and therefore whoever helps the cause of Indian freedom is a friend of India. We sometimes wonder why even after Japan announced a new policy towards China, Chiang-Kai-Shek still refuses to come to terms with Japan and feels secure behind the protective armour of Britain and USA.

Cultural ties between Japan and India which are twenty centuries old were interrupted because of British domination of India. But there is no doubt that when India is free these relations will be revived and further strengthened."

On June 21 Bose made his first broadcast to India. The substance of the broadcast was as follows :—

Countrymen and friends !

What is also of obvious importance to India is the uprooting of British Imperialism in our country.

You know, as well as I do, that when this war broke out, some of our friends thought that the British Government would soon find itself in serious difficulties and that it would naturally be constrained to sue for peace with the party that controlled the cabinets in the majority of Provinces in British India.

According to these friends, all that the Congress had to do was to hold on till the British Government was compelled to make the first advance.

A year passed by but there was no evidence of any change of heart on the part of the British tyrants. Then these friends decided to exert mild pressure on the British Government in an effort to bring about a compromise. In this direction steps were taken, but no tangible results followed.

Even the fall of Singapore, the greatest disaster in British military history, according to Mr. Winston Churchill and Mr. Roosevelt, and the loss of Burma, could not bring about any appreciable change. British Imperialism remains inexorable. Men may come and men may go, empires may come and empires may go, but British Imperialism goes on for ever—that is what our rulers continue to think.

You may call it lack of statesmanship or political bankruptcy, or midsummer madness. But this midsummer madness has its own explanation.

The British Empire has grown out of India. The British people know, no matter to which political party they may belong, that they need to reap all the resources of India. To them the Empire today means India. They are now fighting madly to preserve that Empire. The cost of recognising



India's independence might amount to winning the war, but losing the Empire.

Consequently, no matter what fate besets Britain during the course of this war, the Englishman will endeavour to the very last to keep his Empire, that is, to hold on to India.

Consequently, no Indian should ever cherish the illusion that one day England will be induced to recognise India's independence.

But that is not to say that British politicians will never again compromise with India.

Another attempt at compromise may be made at any time whether under pressure of a failing military situation, or in order to placate the liberal elements in England and America. But what I want to point out is that by compromise the British politicians will never recognise India's independence, but will only try to bluff the Indian people.

Protracted negotiations are only planned to sidetrack the campaign for independence and thereby undermine the national will, as they did between December 1941 and April 1942.

Negotiations which were carried on by Sir Stafford Cripps in India last year have done no harm to the British Government in any way. It only interrupted our struggle for freedom.

Therefore, we should, once and for all, give up hope of any compromise with British Imperialism. Our independence admits of no compromise. Freedom will be won only when the British and their allies quit India for good. And those who really want liberty must fight for it and pay for it with their own blood.

Let us therefore carry on the fight for liberty, inside India and outside India, with all our strength and vigour.

Let us continue the battle with unshakable faith till the day when, under the combined attack of our friends and allies and of ourselves, Anglo-American Imperialism—the British Empire—will be broken up and out of its ashes India will once again emerge as an independent nation.

In this struggle there is no going back, and there can be no faltering. We must march onward till victory is achieved and freedom won."

On June 24 Bose addressed his people again over the radio. He reported Tojo's declaration in the Imperial Diet to his people and expressed his confidence in the victory of the Axis powers.

In the beginning of June, Bose met Rash Behari Bose. They were both in constant touch with Toyama Mitsuru, an aged nationalist of Japan. Towards the end of his stay in Tokyo Bose raised the question of forming a Provisional Government before the Japanese leaders. No immediate answer came from them and Bose was in no hurry to get a quick reply from them. The gist of his farewell speech, recorded shortly before he left Japan was as follows :



"Forty years ago when I was attending primary school, the news of a small nation in the Orient defeating a big European power (i.e. Russia) was widely reported and this gave a filip to the freedom movement. The air was full of tales of Japanese exploits in the war. It was since then that we in India began to respect Admiral Togo and General Nogi. And the visit of Okakura Tenshin to India further deepened our interest in Japan. I have been well received by your country and your people who have evinced great interest in India's freedom struggle....

I thank you all for your warm-hearted sympathy for us."

*A Brief Review of the Political Structure of the Provisional Government and combat ability of INA.*

The main object of Subhas Chandra Bose, after his arrival in the Far East, was to work in the direction of setting up a Provisional Government and to fully reinforce the Indian National Army. This idea had been in his mind ever since he started dreaming in Berlin of using the Far Eastern region as a springboard for his campaign. We would like to deal in a general way about this stage of his life and writings.

Bose revealed his proposition of setting up a Provisional Government for the first time to a section of officials before he left the Japanese capital; he did this only after meeting Prime Minister Tojo and assuring himself of the Japanese position. The Japanese reply to this had been "in principle we have no objection. A definite answer will be given on the occasion of Prime Minister Tojo's visit to Singapore." As soon as he arrived in Singapore, Bose on his part announced his grand plan of a Provisional Government and its features mainly to the overseas Indians though he aimed it at his countrymen in India also. The existing organization was called the Indian Independence League. He had taken this resolute step although he was aware that the strength of all the overseas Indians could not be mobilised and that within India the response would be weak. But it achieved great propaganda effect. Its echo within India was quite powerful at the time and among the overseas Indians also the urge for independence increased manifold. What is more, a great centripetal convergence of forces was observed in the days that followed.

Soon after the resolution to set up the Provisional Government was announced, two big problems arose—one relating to the real form of the government and the second was the question a formal and public recognition by the Japanese Government. As regards the first problem, it was difficult to get all the necessary talent from among the overseas Indians. Bose decided to set up a very simple form of government which would not aspire to have exchange of diplomatic personnel, which would not have to administer any territory but whose main purpose would be propaganda.



But all the same he went round a wide area to find suitable persons, contacted people through his comrades or he did it himself directly. There will be an opportunity to write about these matters later on. Regarding the second problem of recognition, Bose had considered it as an absolute demand. In accordance with the private promise made in Tokyo, Prime Minister Tojo expressed approval of the establishment of the Provisional Government at the time of his visit to Singapore. After that Bose started regular diplomatic negotiations, grappled with some of the burning problems and disposed of business fairly quickly. The Japanese Government gave formal recognition immediately after the Provisional Government was set up and Bose gave some finishing touches to this main task. All the while Bose had the help and support of Japanese experts. But at the same time it is indisputable that the good impression that Bose had made during his visit to Tokyo created a firm attitude in him.

The Provisional Government began its work with extreme simplicity as its main feature. When we follow its later development, we cannot deny that its main feature of simplicity gave place to a lot of complexity. On the one hand there was a demand to maintain that simplicity in organization and on the other the exigencies of retaining control over his followers. He had to provide offices to representatives of the various groups, the civil and the military and those of different religious sects and other classes. Not only that, he had to take into account even personal considerations. Because of all this the size of the Provisional Government gradually increased and there were many instances of creating ministerial posts without portfolio. Moreover, changes in the structure of the Government and addition of ministerial and other staff were made quite frequently which were almost always due to the manoeuvres of subordinate staff and not the result of any pressing demand of work. All this explains Bose's difficult position.

Next, since the Provisional Government did not have any actual administrative power, it led to dissatisfaction among a number of Indians who wanted to promote their own interests in the name of the Provisional Government or who wanted to raise their status in the eyes of the Malaysians and others. Again, regarding the decision of Bose not to have any diplomats, there was dissatisfaction among the Indians in Bangkok who had expected to utilize that chance for their own personal interests. Further, due to the practice of compulsory collection of funds for the Provisional Government, antipathy for the government gradually developed among the overseas Indians especially the merchants. On the other hand, this practice was utilised by a number of merchants for fame and it led to a series of unpleasant disputes, between the Japanese authorities and the Provisional Government. The Hikari Kikan had a hard and painful time dealing with such disputes.



Only in respect of the Andaman and Nicobar islands which came under the jurisdiction of the Provisional Government, there was some good reaction. But it soon died out.

The task that would compensate for all the above weaknesses—the task of securing a foothold in Indian territory had to be realized first and quickly. Accordingly, it became the essence of all Bose's plans. As regards the seat of the Provisional Government also, from the beginning Bose was hoping to select Burma—the so-called springboard for India. Since the then Burmese Government hesitated, Bose had no alternative but to choose Singapore. Singapore was chosen because it provided the advantages of easy propaganda facilities both for India and other countries, good communications and contact with the Southern Army of Japan. Secondly, Bose overcame many difficulties and co-operated in planning the Imphal offensive. And the Provisional Government also utilised this opportunity to shift the seat of the Government to Rangoon, on the basis of the tacit agreement that the Provisional Government would not interfere in the internal affairs of Burma. In doing this, he was aware of the immense reaction it would have in India and he planned thereby to raise the morale of INA.

The ultimate objective of the establishment of the Provisional Government being only to enter Indian territory, the announcement of the depressing news about the Imphal campaign intensified all the discontent and criticism of the Provisional Government. And in the autumn of 1944 even Subhas Chandra Bose, as one might have expected, began to look worried.

Let us deal with the facts in detail. First let us try to grasp the main features of INA.

By and large the INA was an organized force even before the assumption of overall leadership by S. C. Bose. But its organization consisted of too many commissioned officers and inefficient field officers. Further, the fact that the principle of careful selection was not applied resulted in the lowering of standards to a considerable extent. There were of course some efficient men at the higher level and some brave and dutiful soldiers and junior officers. But most of the commissioned officers were simply unprincipled opportunists. And especially the officers above the Major-General rank, the so-called salon officers were men of poor ability. Further, the fact that Bose nominated a number of irregular commissioned officers from among such inefficient people, helped to develop in them the wrong idea that the secret of success in this world lay in winning the goodwill of S. C. Bose. This again, lowered the standards further.

When S. C. Bose assumed the leadership, the number of this army was 13,000 and its organization was based on the principles of guerrilla warfare. The equipment of the army was light according to the needs of the guerrilla army. When Bose arrived in Singapore, he wanted the strength of the army to be increased immediately, as it was too small. As already



stated his target was an army of 50,000. But the Japanese were able to provide equipment only for about 30,000 even if we confined ourselves to light arms. When there was every danger that the existing number would be unwieldy in view of the poor standards of the commissioned officers, Bose impetuously hastened to expand the army into 3 divisions of 30,000 regulars and another unit 20,000 strong mainly consisting of volunteers. He wanted to fill up this number from among the prisoners of war and volunteers from among the overseas Indians. Hikari Kikan was of the view that the maximum the Japanese army could do was to provide for the 30,000 regular INA troops and granting that Bose would be able to collect the other 20,000, it would really be an unorganized crowd without weapons and without command. In spite of that, Bose never gave up his ambition for the expansion of the army and fervently appealed to Prime Minister Tojo for Japan's help in the expansion and strengthening of INA during the latter's visit to Singapore. Prime Minister Tojo simply gave clever replies to this and in half fun and half seriousness dropped a warning that the "disorderly crowd" should be controlled. But, since the interpretation was poor, the meaning could not be conveyed to Bose in clear terms. Because of this, later on when it came to actual implementation of policies, Bose expressed his dissatisfaction with the concerned officials especially with the Hikari Kikan. He even charged that it was a barrier between him and Tojo and that it was obstructing the implementation of a promise to help expand the INA.

Afterwards, in the early summer of 1944, the existing volunteer unit was absorbed into the regular army. A new volunteer unit of another 20,000 was planned. However, since the urge to volunteer for the army had begun to cool off at that time among the Indians, this plan did not materialize.

Following its expansion, Bose reorganized the INA into 3 divisions. However it was once again based on the principles of guerrilla warfare and it had not the strength to fight as a regular division. Besides, Bose was rather interested in getting a propaganda effect. In his own words : "In India, the British army boasts of its military strength 10 times more than its actual strength. The Indians believe this and are being influenced by it. Now, I follow the British Army's example and would like to propagate that the Provisional Government of India has more than 30 divisions. At any rate, I would first like to create units which may be called divisions and fill in the required number of soldiers as quickly as possible".

The INA when it came into existence was called the Army of Indian Independence League. But after the establishment of the Provisional Government, the leadership of the INA was placed under the control of the Provisional Government. In other words S. C. Bose became the head of the Provisional Government as well as the Commander-in-chief of the INA.



The real problem between the INA and the Japanese Army was about the troop command in the beginning. Bose had clearly agreed to bring the INA under the Japanese command in the deployment of its forces and remembering the Franco-British army relations in the first world war and the strains a unitary command would bring about, had come to a verbal agreement with the chief of the Hikari Kikan. But co-operation between the two armies became a real problem later on and led to a lot of unrest. Especially since the autumn of 1944, when the problem of Malayan defence became the issue, the Provisional Government started all sorts of disputes and the Japanese were surprised not a little when Bose denied his having made a verbal promise to the chief of the Kikan.

Similar problems arose when Imphal operations commenced. Bose had vehemently demanded that the INA should be put in charge of front line battles in Imphal right from the beginning. In this matter, probably the propaganda effect was considered. The officers of the INA who were aware of the abilities of their army did not assert themselves like Bose. But they did suspect that they might become subservient to the Japanese Army in case the INA was brought under Japanese Command.

### *Bose's whirlwind travels*

Bose, after throwing off his mask of secrecy in Singapore, drew up a plan of action for the future and plunged into action in right earnest without a day's rest. He took control of the Indian Independence League, developed a plan for the establishment of a Provisional Government and chalked out a scheme for the expansion of INA. At this time, he worked every day without any rest whatever, travelling widely all over the region, contacting political authorities of every country and carrying his message directly to resident Indians of all those areas. Especially August 1, the day when arrangements were made for the declaration of independence of Burma, which, he said, was to be the springboard for India, provided the best opportunity for him to move in the direction of his motherland.

Prior to this, most of Burma had come under Japanese occupation and Britain had not done anything beyond trying some harassing tricks. The administration of Burma was being carried on by the Burmese ex-Premier Ba Maw as the chief administrator. In the month of March the chief administrator Ba Maw was invited to Tokyo by the Japanese Government and Prime Minister Tojo assured him that the independence of Burma would be recognized after necessary arrangements for it were made. Since then preparations for Burmese independence had progressed at a fast pace and it was decided that on August 1, independence of Burma would be proclaimed.

On July 29, Bose entered Rangoon where 100,000 Indians had been awaiting him. At the Mingaladon airport besides Mr. Gani, the head of



the Indian Independence League in Burma, the Japanese and Burmese military, the government officials and common people received him in a grand way. And in the atmosphere also there was a great difference, as one might have expected, between Singapore and the war atmosphere of Rangoon. Bose once again brought new tensions to the fore.

On July 30 Bose addressed an Indian youth organization and hoisting the flag of independence he roused them for action. Bose always pinned his hopes on the youth for great achievements. Next, he attended a meeting of the office-bearers of the Indian Independence League and delivered a lecture at a public meeting in the Town Hall of Indian residents in Rangoon. The resounding cheers of men and women at that meeting continued for a long time and his figure on the platform was magnificent. His great speech rolled on for more than an hour and the applause that followed it was thunderous.

His personality drew the attention of every one when he attended the formal ceremonies in connection with the declaration of Burma's independence on August 1, and also when he attended the dinner in celebration of the day. Seeing before his very eyes the realization of independence by Burma which also like India had been oppressed by the British and had suffered for a long time, he became restless and wanted to devote all his energies to realize India's independence.

Without missing the opportunity, he gave forth a call to the Indians, in which he also spoke of his relations with Burma. We give the contents of that call briefly :

"From 1925 to 1927 I used to gaze from the verandah of my cell in Mandalay Prison on the palace of the last independent King of Burma and I used to wonder when Burma would be free once again. Today Burma is an independent state and I am breathing the atmosphere of that liberated country.

"...In November, 1941, the then Prime Minister of Burma was in England, pleading with his British rulers for a small measure of self-rule, but all his entreaties were treated with contempt and scorn. The people of Burma, thereupon, took up arms against the British, co-operated with the armed forces of Nippon and bounded the British out of Burma. They now have their reward for all their suffering and sacrifice.

"The independence of Burma in this momentous crisis in world history, has a two-fold significance for us. It shows, in the first place, what a nation can achieve, if it knows how to seize an opportunity which history has offered. Secondly, just as the conquest of India supplied the British with a jumping-off ground for their attack on Burma in the nineteenth century—similarly, the emancipation of Burma has supplied the Indian Independence Movement in East Asia with a spring-board for its attack on Britain's army of occupation in India during the twentieth century.



"Friends, you are aware of the many promises which the British Government has given to the Indian people during the course of their rule in India—promises which have always proved to be mere scraps of paper. You are aware also that these promises have been repeated since the outbreak of the present war and all sorts of silly excuses have been put forward to show that in the midst of a war, transference of power from British to Indian hands cannot take place. As against this example, we now see that right in the midst of the war, the promise of liberty made by the Prime Minister of Japan, His Excellency General Tojo, on behalf of his Government and nation, has been fully redeemed. Where there is a will there is a way and this statesmanship and generosity on the part of Japan will bring into bold relief the hypocrisy of British politicians—while they will demonstrate the real character of Japan's state policy.

"The independence of Burma will, I am sure, be soon followed by the independence of the Philippines. Asia is now on the threshold of a new era in her history. This is a unique opportunity for all the suppressed nations of Asia to rise and effect their emancipation. It is above all the sacred duty of the Indian people to seize the present golden opportunity and fulfil their agelong aspirations.

"The liberation of Asia cannot be complete until India is free. The Indian people must, therefore, rise and liberate themselves and thereby help the emancipation of other Asiatic nations. Above all, India must seize the hand of friendship which Japan has offered to India and to other suppressed nations of Asia. Confronted by a common foe, the people of India must march shoulder to shoulder with the brave Nipponese nation, till the enemy is overthrown and India recovers her lost liberty."

Judging from the results of war, the above lofty words would perhaps evoke in others only a bitter smile. But Bose sincerely believed in those ideas and he moulded his actions on the basis of such ideas. The persons who knew him placed complete trust in him and acted accordingly. Those words were very sincere and came from the depths of his heart. Since they were born of his firm conviction, we should judge them from a different standpoint altogether.

On August 4, Bose visited Bangkok for the second time. An interview with the Prime Minister Pibul who was not available during his first visit to this place, was secured and plenty of goodwill and understanding developed between them. After intensifying his contacts with the various liaison organisations of the Axis powers, he addressed a public meeting on August 8 in the Churaronkon University lecture hall, which had been called to celebrate the anniversary of Indian Independence Movement and gave a rousing anti-British speech. On August 9, he went about collecting funds, met the Japanese Ambassador Yoshizawa and the Japanese military authorities and at a fraternal meeting of Indians embraced more than one thousand Indians.



Returning to Singapore on August 14, he held a meeting to condemn Gandhi's arrest. Following the women troops of the INA, Indian students and citizens had paraded through the streets of Singapore, he addressed a public meeting and delivered a rousing and stimulating speech.

On September 3, a public meeting was held in Penang. In that meeting where more than 15,000 people had assembled, contributions for the liberation of the motherland exceeded 2 million dollars. The entire crowd, inspired by his speech which lasted for more than two hours, swore unswerving loyalty to their motherland.

In this way he toured all the areas amidst cheers and jubilation, observing the Indians closely and trying to unite his comrades behind the Provisional Government. But all this could not have given him complete satisfaction because he expressed the need for cautious enthusiasm. This was in spite of the fact that he had worked indefatigably for setting up the Provisional Government. Probably there was the other factor also, viz, the general war situation in Europe was getting worse since the British and Allied powers landed on the European mainland and Italy was about to surrender unconditionally. When we read his lectures to his countrymen of the time and observe their general trend, Bose's political acumen greatly excites our interest.

He said that unfortunately they had to admit that there were Indians whose hearts, minds and even blood had been influenced by slavish ideas. Influenced by such ideas, they fancied that England would achieve victory in this war. But if England had been able just to save her face, it was entirely due to the help and sustenance given by other countries. Because they were getting help from America and were carrying out her orders, the Britishers had been able to secure some victories here and there. But he wanted everybody to realise that the fight that they were engaged in would not save England. This second world war was a struggle between Germany and Japan on one side and America on the other. The result of the war would decide who would be the leading power after the war. Even if the enemy won, Britain would not be able to get anything out of it. America would monopolize everything. Whether the Axis powers won or lost, Britain would be driven out of India in any case.

Their problem was, Bose said, what would happen to them when the Britishers were driven out of India after the war. The problem was whether they would be really free or be ruled by some other power. If so, by whom? If there was anybody who doubted the fact that Britain would be driven out of India, Bose asked, why were foreign troops entering India? In the past, Britain never invited any foreign troops into India. Even in the last war Britain did not tolerate even her friends meddling a bit in India's affairs. But today there were American, Chinese and even African troops in India. The only explanation was that Britain found it impossible



to keep India in subjugation by herself. One year ago the British government announced that she possessed one million Indian troops. They have announced that today the number was 2,000,000. If they had faith in the two million Indian soldiers there was no necessity for England to ask for military assistance from other countries. One could not be sure that an opportunity would not come for these two million soldiers to fight for their own country. And Britain was fully aware that there were no means of preventing this eventuality. Bose said that they were placing great hopes on these soldiers. That they were absolutely convinced of India's freedom was not simply because they could muster their strength outside India, but also because the Indian Army in India could also be expected to play a great role. If they did not make necessary preparations, that task would be extremely difficult. But mutual co-operation was continuously increasing and, what is more, there was tremendous enthusiasm in this regard. Thus, if they combined their efforts, it would not be difficult to secure freedom.

The second problem, according to Bose, was whether they won freedom by their own sacrifices, or by the sacrifices of some other countries for their cause. Those who were courageous, strong-minded and patriotic, did not like to secure their own freedom by the benevolence of other countries. The entire three hundred and eighty-eight million people of India were nationalists. Therefore it was indispensable that the freedom of their great country should be won by the sacrifices of their own men. If their country became free by the benevolence of some other power, then we were bound to lose that freedom. Indians were therefore determined to shed their blood for the INA.

There were three problems, Bose added, before the representatives of the Indian Independence League : (1) They needed soldiers ; (2) they needed money and resources ; (3) they lacked military equipment which they had to borrow from others. So far as the soldiers were concerned, men, especially young men from all over East Asia were coming forward with great enthusiasm, preparations for the training of these young men were already in an advanced stage and he was proud to say that their aspirations were on the way to fulfilment.

Next, Bose went on, more than half of his Indian compatriots in East Asia were not poor. In fact they were living in affluence and they had plenty of money. The number of those who had been helping with money and materials was not small, but that did not match the enthusiasm shown by the young men. Their rich compatriots had been considering how they could get out of the difficulty with the minimum price. There were persons who asked whether to give 5% or 10%. When they had been sending their young brothers to the battlefield, could they talk in terms of 5% or 10% sacrifice. They had to say that they would have to sacrifice their all. In other words it was their duty to see that they offered their entire property.



Bose said that their young brethren were coming forward to offer their life. Their young sisters are also doing likewise. If their rich brethren, therefore, had a sense of honour and a sense of shame they should also come forward offering everything they had.

Bose exhorted his countrymen by saying that if certain people thought of giving up Indian nationality, they would be looked upon as worthless beings by the Indian Independence League. It would not be that easy for them to avoid their responsibility they had towards the League. If they really wanted evasion, there was only one way and that was just to seek British nationality. If they were prepared to become British by applying for British nationality, Bose said, he would not demand anything from them.

In India there was not a single Japanese who was free. The Japanese were not allowed to engage in any business in India. All Japanese property there had been confiscated. But the fact that Indians, without being imprisoned, were allowed to carry on with their avocations was because the Japanese knew that Indians were not responsible for the treatment meted out to them in India. In other words the Japanese knew that Indians were on their side. Therefore, it must be the duty of all Indians to contribute money and materials to win their independence. It was impossible for them to evade their duties as Indians even if they wanted to. There was one thing that was left and that was to declare that such people were slaves of the British. And Bose said that he was thinking of proclaiming that in India they did not have surplus land to accommodate slaves of the British.

Disgruntled elements were circulating wild rumours about the Indian Independence League and they were particularly set on working on the prisoners-of-war. But there was no place for such people in India. Let them have third class tickets to go to England. There was no place in India for pro-British parties. They should always remember the mistakes their ancestors committed in the past. Bose's short final appeal to Indians was that they should rise and make a united effort in this war. His appeal was in very strong terms. Especially when we observe the phrases he used in his appeals to the rich Indians, we feel convinced that Bose was not getting the cooperation he wanted from these Indians. We can see very clearly that Bose had many worries about his plans of establishing a Provisional Government and then commencing work on all fronts simultaneously. Cheers of crowds which gathered round his platform to hear his speeches were not all that we heard.

### *Provisional Government of Free India is born*

Ground work for establishing the Independent Government had progressed at a fast pace as a result of Bose's ceaseless activities for 5 months



ever since his arrival in East Asia. There were of course many points of difference regarding its true character. But, since circumstances demanded that an assault on the British should be commenced without any loss of time, he called a meeting of the representatives of Indian Independence League on October 21 at Singapore, with the agreement of the Japanese government, to speed up the formation of the Provisional Government. More than a thousand representatives assembled for the conference. An important proposal—"The establishment of a Provisional Government of Free India"—was placed before the conference by its President Subhas Chandra Bose and it was unanimously approved by all the members with S. C. Bose as its leader. Bose gave his consent immediately to this and took the oath as follows : "In the name of God, I take this sacred oath that to liberate India and the thirty eight crores of my countrymen I, Subhas Chandra Bose, will continue this sacred war of freedom till the last breath of my life.

"I shall remain always a servant of India and to look after the welfare of thirty eight crores of my Indian brothers and sisters shall be for me my highest duty.

"Even after winning freedom, I will always be prepared to shed even the last drop of my blood for the preservation of India's freedom."

This oath taking ceremony, as far as Bose was concerned, was never an item of formality or a simple ceremony. As in the past, so also in the present in the face of heavy responsibilities he sincerely swore to devote his whole being, body and spirit, and he steadfastly clung to this oath till his last moment which came in less than 2 years. Only that he could not see the fulfilment of his prayer is most regrettable. With Indians inside and outside India, friends and foes alike, watching with interest, the Provisional Government of Free India had its glorious birth with that extraordinary personality. S.C. Bose as its chief. It created a new determination amongst all Indians to achieve complete freedom. The Provisional Government, set up by Indians themselves, went over to the offensive to liberate the 400 million people of India. Keeping its results aside for a while, we would like to say that its historical significance can never be ignored. This is most clearly set out in the declaration made by Bose in connection with the proclamation of the Provisional Government. Bose poured his whole mind and heart into this declaration. And since it illumines his whole life we would record the declaration as a whole so that we can cherish his memory, his character and his calibre of those days.

"As a student of history, and, in particular, of revolutions in different parts of the world, during 22 years of my public life, I always felt that what India was lacking in her fight for freedom were two things—a National Army and a National Government to lead that Army to battle. In the course of the present war, thanks to the brilliant victories achieved by the



armed forces of Nippon, it became possible for Indians in East Asia to organise the Independence League and the Indian National Army.

"The creation of a National Army lent reality and seriousness to the whole Independence Movement in East Asia. If this Army had not been organised, the Independence League in East Asia would have been a mere propaganda organ. With the creation of the National Army, it became possible, as well as necessary, to set up a Provisional Government of Azad Hind (Free India). The Government is born out of the Independence League for the purpose of launching and directing the final struggle for India's freedom.

"In setting up this Provisional Government we are, on the one hand, meeting the exigencies of the Indian situation and are, on the other, following in the footsteps of history. In recent times, the Irish people set up their Provisional Government in 1916. The Czechs did the same during the last World War. And, after the last World War, the Turks, under the leadership of Mustapha Kemal, set up their Provisional Government in Anatolia.

"In our case, the Provisional Government of Azad Hind will not be like a normal peace-time Government. Its functions and its composition will be of a unique kind. It will be a fighting organisation, the main object of which will be to launch and to conduct the last war against the British and their allies in India. Consequently, only such departments will be run by the Government as will be necessary for the launching and the prosecution of the struggle for liberty.

"The Cabinet will consist of certain members who will represent the civil departments of the Government—while there will be others representing the Armed Forces of the Government. Since the purpose of the Government is to fight for independence, the armed forces have been given a large representation on the Cabinet.

"Besides the ordinary Ministers of the Cabinet provision has been made for a number of Advisers to the Cabinet. In this manner, the Provisional Government will maintain close and organic connection with the entire Indian community in East Asia and mobilise all their resources for the coming struggle.

"When the Provisional Government is transferred to Indian soil, it will assume the functions of a normal government operating in its own territory. Many new departments will then be started.

"With the formation of a Provisional Government of Azad Hind the Indian Independence Movement has obtained all the pre-conditions of success. It remains now to start the final struggle for freedom. This will begin when the Indian National Army crosses the frontier of India and commences its historic march to Delhi. This march will end only when the Anglo-Americans are expelled from India and the Indian National Flag is hoisted over the Viceroy's House in New Delhi."



Once again the captivating slogan "On to Delhi" marked the conclusion of the speech. In other respects the main features of the Provisional Government fitted well with its objective of carrying out an armed struggle. After that was accomplished the task of the Provisional Government would be over. And it was repeatedly stated that a new government would be established in India based on the freewill of the people. Accordingly, in the beginning, the structure of the government was very simple as set out below revealing clearly its fighting character :

Head of the Government	...	S. C. Bose
Head of the Military Department	...	{ Responsibility of the Head of the Government
Head of the Foreign Affairs Department	...	
Head of Finance Department	...	Anil Chandra Chatterjee
Head of Propaganda Department	...	S. Appadorai Ayer
Head of Women's Department	...	Luxmi Swaminathan

Besides, he took J. K. Bhonsle the Commander of INA and seven others as ministers without portfolio. Rash Behari Bose was appointed as the supreme counsellor of the government and A. M. Sahay was appointed as Secretary with ministerial rank. Further, the INA was subordinated to the Provisional Government and Bose took charge of it as the Supreme Commander.

Simultaneously with its establishment, the Provisional Government issued its proclamation embodying its mission and objectives to the whole world. This declaration and the previous declarations were conceived and drafted by Bose.

### *Proclamation of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind*

After their first defeat at the hands of the British in 1757 in Bengal, the Indian people fought an uninterrupted series of hard and bitter battles over a stretch of one hundred years. The history of this period teems with examples of unparalleled heroism and self-sacrifice. And in the pages of that history, the names of Sirajuddoula and Mohanlal of Bengal, Haider Ali, Tipu Sultan and Velu Tampi of South India, Appa Sahib Bhonsle and Peshwa Baji Rao of Maharashtra, the Begums of Oudh, Sardar Shyam Singh Atariwala of Punjab and last, but not least, Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi, Tantia Topi, Maharaj Kunwar Singh of Dumraon and Nana Sahib—among others—the names of all these warriors are forever engraved in letters of gold.

Unfortunately for us, our forefathers did not at first realise that the British constituted a grave threat to the whole of India and they did not therefore put up a united front against the enemy. Ultimately, when the Indian people were roused to the reality of the situation, they made a concerted move—and under the flag of Bahadur Shah in 1857, they fought



their last war as free men. In spite of a series of brilliant victories in the early stages of this war, ill-luck and faulty leadership gradually brought about their final collapse and subjugation. Nevertheless, such heroes as the Rani of Jhansi, Tantia Topi, Kunwar Singh and Nana Sahib live like eternal stars in the nation's memory to inspire us to greater deeds of sacrifice and valour.

Forcibly disarmed by the British after 1857 and subjected to terror and brutality, the Indian people lay prostrate for a while—but with the birth of the Indian National Congress in 1885, there came a new awakening. From 1885 till the end of the last World War, the Indian people, in their endeavour to recover their lost liberty, tried all possible methods—namely, agitation and propaganda, boycott of British goods, terrorism and sabotage—and finally armed revolution. But all these efforts failed for a time. Ultimately, in 1920, when the Indian people, haunted by a sense of failure were groping for a new method. Mahatma Gandhi came forward with the new weapon of non-co-operation and civil disobedience.

For two decades thereafter, the Indian people went through a phase of intense patriotic activity. The message of freedom was carried to every Indian home. Through personal example, people were taught to suffer, to sacrifice and to die in the cause of freedom. From the centre to the remotest villages, the people were knit together into one Political organisation. Thus, the Indian people not only recovered their political consciousness, but became a political entity once again. They could now speak with one voice and strive with one will for one common goal. From 1937 to 1939, through the work of the Congress Ministries in eight provinces, they gave proof of their readiness and capacity to administer their own affairs.

Thus, on the eve of the present World War, the stage was set for the final struggle for India's Liberation. During the course of this war, Germany with the help of her allies has dealt shattering blows to our enemy in Europe—while, Nippon, with the help of her allies has inflicted a knock-out blow to our enemy in East Asia. Favoured by a most happy combination of circumstances, the Indian people today have a wonderful opportunity for achieving their national emancipation.

For the first time in recent history, Indians abroad have also been politically roused and united in one organisation. They are not only thinking and feeling in tune with their country men at home, but are also marching in step with them, along the path to freedom. In East Asia, in particular, over two million Indians are now organised as one solid phalanx, inspired by the slogan of Total Mobilisation. And in front of them stand the serried ranks of India's Army of Liberation, with the slogan "Onward to Delhi" on their lips.

Having goaded Indians to desperation by its hypocrisy and having driven them to starvation and death by plunder and loot, British rule in



India has forfeited the good-will of the Indian people altogether and is now living a precarious existence. It needs but a flame to destroy the last vestige of that unhappy rule. To light that flame is the task of India's Army of Liberation. Assured of the enthusiastic support of the civil population at home and also of a large section of Britain's Indian Army and backed by a gallant and invincible allies abroad—but relying in the first instance on its own strength, India's Army of Liberation is confident of fulfilling its historic role.

Now that the dawn of Freedom is at hand, it is the duty of the Indian people to set up a Provisional Government of their own, and launch the last struggle under the banner of that Government. But with all the Indian leaders in prison, the people at home totally disarmed—it is not possible to set up a Provisional Government within India or to launch an armed struggle under the aegis of that Government. It is, therefore, the duty of the Indian Independence League in East Asia, supported by all patriotic Indians at home and abroad to undertake this task—the task of setting up a Provisional Government of Azad Hind (Free India) and of conducting the last fight for freedom, with the help of the Army of Liberation (that is, the Azad Hind Fauj or the Indian National Army) organised by the League.

Having been constituted as the Provisional Government of Azad Hind by the Indian Independence League in East Asia, we enter upon our duties with a full sense of the responsibility that has devolved on us. We pray that Providence may bless our work and our struggle for the emancipation of our Motherland. And we hereby pledge our lives and the lives of our comrades-in-arms to the cause of her freedom, of her welfare, and her exaltation among the nations of the world.

It will be the task of the Provisional Government to launch and to conduct the struggle that will bring about the expulsion of the British and of their allies from the soil of India. It will then be the task of the Provisional Government to bring about the establishment of a permanent National Government of Azad Hind constituted in accordance with the will of the Indian people and enjoying their confidence. After the British and their allies are overthrown and until a permanent National Government of Azad Hind is set up on Indian soil, the Provisional Government will administer the affairs of the country in trust for the Indian people.

The Provisional Government is entitled to, and hereby claims, the allegiance of every Indian. It guarantees religious liberty, as well as equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens. It declares its firm resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally and transcending all the differences cunningly fostered by an alien Government in the past.



In the name of God, in the name of bygone generations who have welded the Indian people into one nation and in the name of the dead heroes who have bequeathed to us a tradition of heroism and self-sacrifice—we call upon the Indian people to rally round our banner and to strike for India's Freedom. We call upon them to launch the final struggle against the British and all their allies in India and to prosecute that struggle with valour and perseverance and with full faith in Final Victory—until the enemy is expelled from Indian soil and the Indian people are once again a Free Nation.

Signed on behalf of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind :—

Subhas Chandra Bose, Head of the State, Prime Minister and Minister for War. Minister for Foreign Affairs, Supreme Commander of the Indian National Army.

Capt. Miss Lakshmi (Women's Organisation), S. A. Ayer (Publicity and Propaganda), Lt.-Col. A. C. Chatterjee (Finance), Lt.-Col. Aziz Ahmed, Lt.-Col. N. S. Bhagat, Col. J. K. Bhonsle, Lt.-Col. Gulzara Singh, Lt.-Col. M. Z. Kiani, Lt.-Col. A. D. Loganathan, Lt.-Col. Ehsan Qadir, Lt.-Col. Shah Nawaz (Representatives of the Armed Forces); A. M. Sahay, Secretary (with Ministerial Rank); Rash Behari Bose (Supreme Adviser); Karim Gani, Debnath Das, D. M. Khan, A. Yellappa, J. Thivy, Sardar Ishar Singh (Advisers); A. N. Sarkar (Legal Adviser).

The establishment of a Provisional Government for the Indian Independence Movement was an original idea of Bose and he had spoken about it on many occasions. Its establishment therefore was not unexpected. But the announcement of the actual establishment was made repeatedly and this had a great effect inside and outside India. More than anything else, it struck the Indians and Britishers alike in India as a new reality.

The Japanese Government was informed of the establishment of the Provisional Government and it decided at the cabinet meeting of October 23 to recognize it and immediately made an announcement to that effect. The declaration of the Japanese government on that occasion was as follows : "Having come to know that the Provisional Government of Free India has been established with S. C. Bose as its head, the Imperial Government, convinced that it marks a great advance on the road of complete independence which Indians have ardently desired for many years, hereby recognizes this as the Provisional Government of Free India and declares that all necessary help and co-operation will be given to it." S. C. Bose, the head of the Provisional Government of Free India declared war on both England and America as a first step in the struggle. The Japanese Government promptly announced this on October 24, at 0.55 hours. Thus,



2 million overseas Indians and the INA as a single fighting unit turned two great countries like England and America into their enemies immediately after they had declared themselves as free.

Bose did not forget, on this epoch-making day in history, to inspect a march-past of the confident INA forces. After the military parade was over at about 10-30 a.m. on October 24, in the wide open space in front of the town hall of Singapore, Bose went up the rostrum in his imposing military uniform and delivered his first public address as the head of the Provisional Government.

The total attention of 30,000 soldiers of the INA was focussed on the person of "Netaji" and as they cheered one could see that in their thoughts they had reached the Red Fort In Delhi.

A little before this, i.e. on October 22, the day after the establishment of the Provisional Government was announced, Bose attended a parade held by the Rani of Jhansi Regiment which was created and christened by himself and was being commanded by Captain Luxmi. The women looked quite impressive in their khaki uniforms and with their weapons. He renewed their faith by his encouraging and inspiring words.

The Southern Army of Japan with the explicit permission of its Commander Terauchi announced the Provisional Government's declaration of war against England and America. Since the INA expressed its determination to undergo the same suffering as comrades-in-arms in the attack against the Britishers and their allies, the Southern Army, with gratitude and a feeling of comradeship, promised to give every support and co-operation to the INA and be prepared to embrace death in the attempt. The Southern Army further announced : ".....we have repeated again and again that Japan has no territorial or economic ambitions whatever and we believe that Indians themselves have fully recognized this fact.....". This fact clearly explodes the basic misconception that the character of the Provisional Government of Free India and its declaration of war against the British simply supported the ambitions of Japan. This misconception led to doubts and lack of faith among a section of Indians and it was brought about entirely by British propaganda.

As stated above, the establishment of the Provisional Government was an important development in the independence movement led by Bose. And it was his own idea and a crystallization of his efforts. There was not a single point in this development which was suggested or thrust upon him by Japan. It is nothing but the truth that the Provisional Government never had the character of a puppet regime. It is equally unimaginable that Bose was made of the mettle of which puppets were made. But then, how much did the authority and power of this Provisional Government help Bose in converting his dreams into reality? Though the Japanese Government had announced its recognition of the Provisional Government,



it was, if we may say so, a recognition of the spirit of the matter and not a formal recognition involving exchange of diplomats etc. The Japanese Government had made it clear from the beginning that she could not establish diplomatic relations because it was involved in a war. Further, though the Southern Army of Japan had promised full support and co-operation, it amounted only to encouraging them and expressing the hope that they would advance into India. The Command avoided making the commitment that it would operate with the INA in actual battles. Added to this there were a number of difficulties within the body of the Provisional Government. When we take all these into consideration, it is not difficult to guess that Bose had reasons to be dissatisfied with the state of affairs. Further, there is no reason why Subhas Bose being an intelligent person, could not foresee these developments. The fact is that the Provisional Government was set up in a hurry in spite of the fact that he was aware of these factors. He was aiming mainly at the propaganda effect at home and abroad. It shows how in spite of the fact that he did not have any territory under his control, he could band together two million Indians, raise an army of thirty thousand create a sense of confidence in victory and a menace to his enemies—Britain and America. That his self-confidence was neither empty nor over-confidence is affirmed by persons who knew his integrity and strength. Only, it required support. In other words, it was Japan which hastened to help the Provisional Government and its army by aligning herself as a friend. But then, how was the war situation for the Axis powers? What reactions did the Japanese failure in their attack on Guadalcanal and the conditions which led to the landing on the Italian mainland, create in the intelligent mind of Subhas Bose? Did he shut his eyes to the reality before him and dash headlong with his own plans? No, he simply hurried up his plans. He had full satisfaction in the earnestness of the Japanese and was convinced that the strategic position was absolutely invincible. He carried out his plans to march into India with utmost speed and vigour before these conditions changed and dashed forward knowing that otherwise there would be no solution. Let us see how these events occurred in reality.

### *The Greater East Asia Conference*

Bose arrived in Tokyo once again towards the end of October 1943 soon after the establishment of the Provisional Government. His main purpose was to get recognition for his Provisional Government from the Japanese Government and to observe the Greater East Asia Conference which was to be held in the first week of November. Bose who had torn off his mask of secrecy only six months ago in this city and surprised everyone at home and abroad, now entered the capital in a grand manner, as the head of the



Provisional Government of Free India. The Japanese Government received him as a national guest and he was put up in the house of Shibuzawa Ko Shakuro at Shiba. The day following his arrival he first made a courtesy call at the Imperial Palace and then met Prime Minister Tojo for the second time. He politely expressed his gratitude for Japanese goodwill and then fervently pleaded for continued co-operation in his ambitious plans.

On November 2, the Ambassador of Germany, Mr. Stahmer visited Bose and handed over a telegram in which official recognition to the Provisional Government of Free India was given by his government. With this Bose's Provisional Government secured the recognition of two Axis powers and only Italy which was about to fall could not give recognition. Bose was overwhelmed with emotion as he remembered his earlier trying days when he went knocking from door to door at the various embassies and legations in Kabul after he escaped from India.

November 3 is the Meiji Constitution day. The chrysanthemum flowers which blossom and radiate fragrance so abundantly today were not different during the war. Gazing out into the clear autumnal sky from the window of Shibuzawa's house which opens out into a beautiful view of Shingawa gulf, Bose had an occasion to reflect on the illustrious memory of the Meiji Emperor and how the then little known country of Japan had won a victory over Russia. On this very day in the afternoon there was the first get-together of the participants in the Greater East Asia Conference at the official residence of the Prime Minister. Except for Ba Maw, the Prime Minister of Burma, all others were strangers to Bose. He mixed with all the representatives—the Prime Minister of Manchuria, the Prime Minister of China, the representative of Thailand, the President of Philippines—in a friendly way. We will record his impressions of these people elsewhere.

On November 5, the Conference opened and Bose, according to schedule, took his seat as an observer. He chose to be an observer because he was of the opinion that India would not join the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere. Japanese opinion also concurred with his. Those who accompanied him were, Mr. A. C. Chatterjee, the head of the Finance Department, Commander Bhonsle and another 14 Indians, and a Japanese official of civil administration Mr. Chida.

Prime Minister Tojo was first elected chairman of the conference and then representatives of various countries made speeches all coloured by the needs of their own countries. And on the second day, at about 1 p.m. the conference adopted the famous joint declaration of Greater East Asia. Though this joint declaration had no direct relevance to India, since we should not overlook its historical significance in the context of that period, we record the full text here :



*Joint declaration of Greater East Asian Countries*

It is the basic principle for the establishment of world peace that the nations of the world have each its proper place and enjoy prosperity in common through mutual aid and assistance. But the U.S.A. and Britain have in seeking their own prosperity oppressed other nations and peoples. Especially in East Asia they indulged in insatiable aggression and exploitation and sought to satisfy their inordinate ambitions of enslaving the entire region and finally they came to seriously menace the stability of East Asia. Herein lies the cause of the present war.

The countries of Greater Asia with a view to contributing to the cause of world peace undertake to co-operate towards prosecuting the war of Greater East Asia to a successful conclusion, liberating their region from the yoke of British-American domination and ensuring their own existence and in constructing a Greater East Asia in accordance with the following principles :

(1) The countries of Greater East Asia through mutual co-operation will ensure the stability of their region and construct an order of common prosperity and well-being based upon justice.

(2) The countries of Greater East Asia will ensure the fraternity of nations in their region by respecting one another's sovereignty and independence and practising mutual assistance and amity.

(3) The countries of Greater East Asia by respecting one another's traditions and developing the creative faculties of each race will enhance the culture and civilization of Greater East Asia.

(4) The countries of Greater East Asia will endeavour to accelerate their economic development through close co-operation upon a basis of reciprocity and to promote thereby the general reciprocity of their region.

(5) The countries of Greater East Asia will cultivate relations with all the countries of the world and work for the abolition of racial discrimination, the promotion of cultural intercourse and the opening of resources throughout the world and contribute thereby to the progress of mankind.

After the above declaration was adopted, the Prime Minister of Burma, Ba Maw brought a new motion before the conference, in which he vehemently argued that there could be no liberation of Asia without the liberation of India. It was unanimously approved and the conference expressed "full sympathy and support to the Indian struggle for independence". With this the conference attained special significance. What is more, as far as the Provisional Government of Free India was concerned, the conference helped it to come closer to the East Asian countries from then onwards. Bose was greatly moved by the powerful speech of the Prime Minister of Burma and the unanimous support of the assembly. As he stood up to speak, he was given a great ovation by the entire assembly. He first



expressed his gratitude for the honour and opportunity given him to be an observer at this historic conference and especially for the sympathy and support expressed for the coming struggle. Withholding his tears he said, "This resolution, I assure you, Your Excellency, will travel far beyond the walls of this stately mansion and will bring hope, encouragement and inspiration to millions and millions of my countrymen groaning under the heel of British oppression, while it will also strike terror in the hearts of all those who have a guilty conscience," and asserted his firm determination to stand up against the enemy with the support of the invincible military power of Japan and the sympathy of the newly liberated countries of East Asia.

The force of his delivery compelled every member of the conference to pay attention to every phrase of his speech. For instance he said : "Your Excellency, as I was sitting, listening to the proceedings of this august assembly yesterday and to-day, the panorama of the world's history passed before my mind's eye. My thoughts went back to the many international congresses and conferences held during the last 100 years and more. My thoughts went back to the Congress of Vienna in 1815 after the downfall of the Napoleonic Empire, to the Congress of Paris in 1856 after the Crimean War, to the Congress of Berlin in 1878 after the Russo-Turkish War in the Balkans, to the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919 at the end of the last War, to the Washington Conference held in 1921 for ensuring the Anglo-American domination of the Pacific and Far East, and to the Locarno Conference in 1925 for ingenuously binding the hands of the German people, once and for all. My thoughts also went back to the Assembly of the League of Nations, that League of Nations along whose corridors and lobbies I spent many a day, knocking at one door after another, in the vain attempt to obtain a hearing for the cause of Indian freedom.

"And as I sat listening to the proceedings of this historic assembly, I began to wonder what the difference was between this assembly and similar assemblies that the world's history has witnessed in bygone days.

"Your Excellency, this is not a conference for dividing the spoils among the conquerors. This is not a conference for hatching a conspiracy to victimize a weak power, nor is it a conference for trying to defraud a weak neighbour. This is an assembly of liberated nations, an assembly that is out to create a new order in this part of the world, on the basis of the sacred principles of justice, national sovereignty, reciprocity in international relations and mutual aid and assistance. I do not think that it is an accident that this Assembly has been convened in the Land of the Rising Sun. This is not the first time that the world has turned to the East for light and guidance. Attempts to create a new order in the world have been made before and have been made elsewhere, but they have failed. They have failed because of the selfishness, avarice, and suspicion in those who



had to play a leading role in the creation of a new order. It is, therefore, in the fitness of things and in conformity with historic precedent that the world should once again turn to the East for light.

Your Excellency, "I believe that history has ordained that in the creation of a new, free and prosperous East, the Government and people of Nippon would play a leading role. This role for the Government and people of Nippon was carved out by history as early as 1905 when, for the first time, an Asiatic nation stood up to resist western aggression."

One of the most important and interesting aspects of his speech related to his ideas about the relation of universalism and co-prosperity and the extension of the co-prosperity sphere. He recalled how India forgot her genius of universalism since the middle ages and thus became subjugated and how even now she was suffering in misery and wretchedness and was unable to distinguish between real universalism and false universalism. He said: "I must confess, however, to my great sorrow, in this connection, that during the Middle Ages, India developed a false type of universalism and, it is because of this false universalism, that it was so easy for European powers to settle in, and ultimately to conquer India. But we have learned through sorrow, suffering, and humiliation to distinguish now between the false internationalism and the true. We know now that that internationalism is true, which does not ignore nationalism, but is rooted in it." He continued "We have also studied with great interest the attempts made in Europe and elsewhere to set up a new international order. We have learned from these experiments and from the failure which ultimately crowned these experiments. We are the wiser for this experience and today we are convinced that the establishment or the creation of an international society of nations can be possible only if we begin by setting up what I may call regional federations, like this Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere."

"Your Excellency, may I humbly point out that the establishment of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere is of interest, of vital interest, not only to the people of East Asia but, if I may say so, to the people of the whole of Asia and to mankind in general." He further said that from his personal contact with all parts of Asia, he believed that India would be more than a bridge between East Asia and West Asia and that Greater East Asia co-prosperity scheme had significance for the people of entire Asia. "Asia for Asians", i.e. the establishment of a Greater Asia Co-prosperity Sphere and finally a World League was not to be a league of robbers, but a step undoubtedly in the direction of real international society. However, these visions of a new world, a new Asia, of a Greater Asia that would prosper in freedom—all these depended on whether we were victorious or not in this Second World War. As far as India was concerned they were indivisibly bound up with Japan and her allies in the Second World War... For India there was no way except to wage a relentless struggle



against British Imperialism. Compromise with England meant compromising with slavery.

Bose continued : "I, therefore, want to assure Your Excellencies, that come what may, no matter how long and hard the struggle may be, no matter what the suffering and the sacrifice involved may prove to be, we are determined to fight to the bitter end, being fully confident of our final victory. But I have no illusions about the magnitude of the task that awaits us. I do not minimize the strength of the enemy. I claim to know the British people intimately and at first hand. I have known them since I was a child of five and, knowing them so intimately, knowing the strength and the weakness of the enemy in India, and knowing also our own strength and weakness, I feel fully confident of our ultimate victory.

"I do not know how many of those who will go to war against our powerful and unscrupulous enemy, I do not know how many of the members of our National Army, will survive the coming war, but that is of no consequence to us. Whether we individually live or die, whether we survive the war and live to see India free or not, what is of consequence is the fact that India shall be free, that Anglo-American Imperialism shall be wiped out of India, and the menace that now hangs over the whole of East Asia will be removed once and for all."

"I pray to God that this Joint Declaration which this historic assembly has unanimously adopted this afternoon may prove to be a charter for the nations of East Asia and, what is more, a charter for the suppressed nations of the whole world. May this Joint Declaration prove to be in the world's history, the charter, the new charter of liberty for the year 1943 and after." With this his great speech ended. It held the entire assembly in awe. His deep emotions reflected in his voice and in his tears, his foresight, the richness of the contents of his speech, his vast knowledge and finally the strength of his character which ran through his words—all combined to produce an admirable effect. His participation and his speech truly were the essence of the Greater East Asia Conference.

Immediately after Bose's speech was over, Prime Minister Tojo expressing his unswerving determination to help Indian Independence made the following important announcement : "Japan's offer to give all help and support to India in her long cherished ambition to achieve independence is already made clear in many declarations. And now that we see that the Provisional Government of Free India has quickly established itself and that the spirit of common purpose has united them so rapidly, Japan has decided as a first step, to return in the near future the Indian territory of Andaman and Nikobar Islands, at present occupied by Japan, to the Provisional Government of Free India."

Soon thereafter the Greater East Asia Conference came to an end. Our Subhas Chandra Bose by his participation in the conference became a



shining star in Greater East Asian firmament. For him personally also, this day became the most splendid of all in the entire period of two years of his activity in East Asia. The future historians, whatever their evaluation of Greater East Asia Conference, cannot forget the imposing figure of S. C. Bose who carried the entire weight of the Indian Independence Movement on his shoulders on the occasion.

Seizing this golden opportunity, Bose made a radio broadcast from Tokyo telling Indians at home and abroad of the completion of preliminaries for Indian independence and sounding a call to rise for the final struggle, pouring new enthusiasm into them. The following are the important points of his broadcast :

"We have realized five of the six important objectives necessary for the salvation of our motherland. First, thorough knowledge of the war situation, secondly, sympathy of Britain's enemies : thirdly, direct relations between our agents at home and abroad ; fourthly, synchronizing the Indian war of independence with the present world war ; and fifthly, the organization of the Provisional Government of India. The last objective, which still remains to be achieved, is the delivering of the fatal blow to the enemy in co-operation with our allies. Upon the outbreak of the war, India was ready to attain her political freedom but she lacked two essentials ; first, a national army, and, secondly, outside aid. Today, we have got both. I have always been stressing the significance of the chance which the war situation has offered us and have been urging Indians to rise to the occasion. I urge upon all my countrymen not to let this chance go by."

On November 8, Bose addressed a Japanese gathering at a public hall and enlightened them on Indian affairs. He explained that wrong impressions about India were created even among her friends by enemy propaganda. It is worthwhile to re-state the main points of his explanations, especially because there were persons who thought that Indians would not pull on together for a long time unitedly.

The first point was that it was said that Indians had never had any unity in the past and had always been quarrelling amongst themselves. And of course it was essential that law and order was maintained in that country. But, it was only for a little more than a century that Britain had subjugated India completely and for more than a century before that India had carried on a struggle against the English for independence. In fact if we traced the ancient history of India the country was united into one entity about 2,300 years ago. That territory included Afghanistan and a portion of Persia. From that ancient era of the Buddhist King Asoka to the period of the Moghuls, India has seen many glorious periods economically, politically and culturally. In about a hundred years after the Moghul period, the British completely subjugated India.

To say that India did not resist the Britishers was to show our ignorance.



It was their misfortune that they did not have capable leaders. But they had learnt a lesson from experience. A nation which had an ideal and self-confidence could never be liquidated. When they had the background of a living tradition even today, none could kill their spirit.

The second point was about religion. The enemy was meanly promoting a division between Hindus and Muslims, saying that it was an inheritance from the Moghul times. But this was absolutely groundless. On the contrary, the Muslim period proved that India could be a unity again.

The problem of religion of which we heard so often was not known in India until it was created for the first time in 1906 by the Britishers. They took away arms from the Indians as a first step to break their resistance. Next, they set up feudal governments in some areas retaining real power in their own hands all the while and divided the country into two categories : (1) Indian India and (2) British India. After that, when the national movement became strong, Britain, in addition to the above means of dividing Indians also made use of religion to divide Hindus and Muslims.

The third means which they invented recently was the problem of scheduled castes and like the religious weapon, this weapon also failed.

The fourth measure which the Britishers were planning was to divide the country into 4 or 5 units for the sake of retaining their control.

In this way, Bose pointed out how the problems of India had been used for propaganda purposes by the Britishers and how he himself had been trying to counter such enemy propaganda by seizing every possible opportunity. He cited an example, that of a Muslim called Hassan who was dear to him and who had served him ever since he left Berlin, to illustrate the truth of what he was saying.

Bose was very severe with his subordinates on questions of food taboos and other customs based on religion. He prevented a number of ugly incidents in the camps of Burma. He was firmly convinced that with the all important objective of national independence before them, differences of faith or sect should be entirely out of consideration. However, the actual conditions were quite difficult and could not be managed as he expected ; and the fact that India was divided today into Pakistan and India and that Pakistan had taken up an anti-Indian posture would perhaps hurt his soul.

Bose took some time away from his official business during his stay in the capital to see Rash Bihari Bose who was confined to bed due to illness. When he met his seriously sick and great friend, both of them became very emotional. The sick Bose, apart from his physical weakness, appeared somewhat pessimistic about the struggle for independence. But S. C. Bose, on the contrary, was unshaken in his determination regarding the military campaign. In fact, he parted from his sick friend promising to meet him again after victory and as the leader of the nation.



Bose expressed a wish to include in his day's programme a visit to the Indian students' hostel. He had always pinned great hopes on the youth and was deeply attached to them. Indian students also had the same feeling of attachment towards him. When Indian students lined up to receive him at the dormitory, it had a great effect on Bose. Like a mother he showered his heart-felt affection on them and inspired them by his words to devote themselves to the future wellbeing of their motherland.

After that, two weeks slipped by very fast in meeting Indians and inspiring them, in attending receptions by the Japanese navy, infantry and foreign office and in attending to regular official work etc. During this time, he also used his entire strength and energy in bargaining for the fullest expansion of the INA and got warships and boats transferred as a move to build up his navy and air force. He even secured the facility to get all necessary personnel trained by the Japanese for the respective tasks.

At a press interview regarding the policy to be adopted to meet the food deficit in India, he explained that there were two plans, either to transport the rice we had to India in our ships or to store the food in Japanese ports and get the British authorities to take them. He chose the latter. If the British ships came, he said he would transfer the foodgrains without any conditions. But the British would not come. The British not only did not want to accept the foodgrains, but would rather just watch people die of famine by refusing our just proposals.....It appears that preliminaries to transport the foodgrains to India had been completed through the Hikari Kikan and through Burma and according to broadcasts beamed towards India, some rice was actually transported to India.

The scheduled stay of Subhas Bose in the capital was over and the day to bid goodbye to Shibuzawa's family arrived. His deference to the family members, his polished upbringing and his fine behaviour at once drew the respect and affection of the whole family. When a Japanese sword and other presents were given to him at the time of saying goodbye, it was part of his nature to say that he would keep all those things in the same house and would come again to receive them after India succeeded in achieving independence. We felt sure that this was not vanity and that he spoke out his mind sincerely. Even today, the entire family of Shibuzawa, from Mr. Shibuzawa, to the last servant, cannot help remembering his personality all the time. Mr. Shibuzawa is of the opinion that even in the whole wide world they would not find many lovable personalities like Bose.

To complete this chapter, we would like to record the impressions that Bose carried of the Greater East Asia Conference as an observer. This is taken mainly from his own writings and his statements.

Regarding the atmosphere of the conference in general, the opinion of the Burmese Prime Minister Ba Maw was the most important. One important



passage from his lecture is given here—'The representatives of every country in East Asia have used different languages and perhaps different expressions. But in the background of all these there is a common thought and a common purpose and a common will'.

The words of the Burmese Prime Minister brought out and explained the mind of all the representatives accurately. This may be because the atmosphere of the conference did reflect the feeling that 'Let Asia be one'.

Regarding the representatives of the various countries Bose said that our observations were bound to be coloured by our own ideas.

Regarding Prime Minister Tojo, he said : 'True to his military background, Tojo wanted the conference to be bold and lucid and this was reflected in his own expressions. His arguments clearly reflected his ideals'.

'The Prime Minister of China' he said 'was a statesman with a trained mind and rich experience. He gave the impression of a veteran pilot of a ship who had braved many a rough sea and successfully guided the ship to port. Though he was a man of great learning and versatile talents, he was a man of quiet convictions and he would not overwhelm his listeners with his ideas or force them to accept them'.

Regarding the President of Philippines he said : 'He was a talented person possessing a powerful voice and a fiery tongue. By his sincerity and warm feelings he would bring tears to the eyes of his listeners and would capture their hearts completely.'

Regarding the representative of Thailand, he said : 'He knew a great deal about the rich tradition of his country and was of extremely polite and polished behaviour. In whichever social circle he may appear and in any part of the world, his presence would add lusture to it'.

Regarding the Prime Minister of Burma, Ba Maw, he said : "He was a soldier from the battle-front who knew the perils to his country and was determined to give a knock-out blow to the enemy. He would not waste any efforts. He exerted all his strength for the establishment of a Free Union of Asia".

Regarding the proceedings of the main conference, he said : "it is necessary to say a word about the speakers who gave the lead in harmonizing various opinions. When we read the records of various international conferences, we can see that one man or a just few people who want to control the conferences come into conflict with the rest. Metternich of the Vienna Congress, Clemenceau and Lloyd George at the Paris conference were some such men. In such conferences usually a free decision is impossible and a few powerful countries veto the demands of other countries and by using deceptively sweet words they also cause confusion among the weaker nations. But in this conference the atmosphere of might monopolizing the whole conference was not felt at all and at the same time there was not even a trace of deceptively sweet words, pressure, strategem, etc."



In expressing such opinions, Bose did use some ornamentations, but he was no doubt basically sincere.

One among the many unforgettable impressions that Bose left during his visit to Tokyo for the Greater East Asia Conference was on Okawa Shumeii, as recorded earlier in connection with Rash Behari Bose. Okawa had participated in a number of negotiations with Indians. And when Bose was in the capital for the Greater East Asia Conference, Okawa met him more than once. During one such meeting with Bose, the talk drifted on to the war situation. Bose casually remarked that if Germany was defeated in the war, he should carry on the fight till the last even by joining the Reds. Okawa who had known that Bose was opposed to communism was not a little surprised. When he asked him the reason for such a change, Bose said, "Because you have not experienced British oppression physically, you are surprised. But we who have been oppressed by the British colonialists for so many years are not at all surprised. I am prepared to shake hands even with Satan himself to drive out the British from India." Okawa was shocked at this incomprehensible statement and of course he did not agree with Bose. And he also guessed that Bose probably knew by that time that the Japanese war position had reached a hopeless stage. We will revert to the subject again later.

### *Bose's visit to Nanking, Manila and Java*

After the conclusion of the Greater East Asia Conference, the Prime Minister of China on his way back home stopped for a while at Fukuoka with Teraoka and other two consular companions. There he expressed a desire to invite Bose to Nanking with the following statement : "Recently I met the head of the Provisional Government of Free India at Tokyo. Though he sat through the conference practically saying nothing and expressed himself only towards the end, his robust physique, his regal looks, exuberant energy, his spiritual convictions, and the content of his speech all go to show that he is undoubtedly a revolutionary person. I believe that he is adored by men because of the fact that he has gone to prison eleven times, has fasted on seven occasions and above all he is a scholar learned in English and German....." This impression of Bose of the Prime Minister of China and the opinion Bose had formed about the Prime Minister of China were mutually complimentary and so of real interest. Right at the very first meeting with Bose, the Prime Minister of China developed a liking for him and it developed to the extent that he invited him to Nanking immediately. With the understanding of Japan he decided to invite Bose to Nanking and despatched the Propaganda Minister, who was accompanying him on the trip, in advance to China to make preparations for receiving Bose as a national guest.



Bose was also looking forward with keen interest to his visit to Nanking. His suite consisted of Bhonsle and two other Indians and from the Japanese side there were Chida, Yamamoto and Ota of the Foreign Office. The Nanking Government put Bose up in the State Guest House. He was treated warmly, honoured at a special meeting of the National Assembly, and given a guard of honour at the Military Academy. Bose called on the Supreme Commander of the Chinese army and also met the German and other ambassadors. He also gave return dinners to everyone.

Just about that time, the construction of a pagoda was proceeding in a corner of Nanking. The pagoda was in memory of a priest whose remains were discovered by the Japanese army while digging the area. When Mr. Ota of the Foreign Office referred to this pagoda under construction casually during their talk and referred to 2,000 years of Indo-Chinese relations, Bose said that he would send a representative if a ceremony was held for the dedication of the pagoda.

The real purpose of his visit to Nanking was quite something else. At the back of his mind he was looking for an opportunity to express his views regarding the Chungking Government and the Chinese people.

On the night of November 20 he made a radio speech for more than 40 minutes. It was a speech full of warmth and enthusiasm for peace in Asia and also about the political situation in China. At the same time it was the lone sober voice of an Indian regarding Sino-Japanese relations of the past, expressing misgivings about them. We shall record the salient points of that speech here.

First of all, he expressed his own opinion about China and especially his great regard for Sun Yat Sen. When he was the President of Indian National Congress in 1938, he had organized a medical mission to Chungking and despatched it as a symbol of goodwill from India. Since then medicines and other materials were donated to China. After the visit of Pandit Nehru to Nanking in 1939, he himself had wanted to visit Nanking and the Chungking Government had expressed its willingness to receive him. But, since the British Government refused to issue a passport the trip did not materialize. But his adoration for China could be traced to his primary school stage when a peaceful revolution was carried out against the Manchu dynasty in 1911. Like the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-5 it had a lasting impression. When he was at the university, he and his friends were greatly attracted to Sun Yat Sen as they read his biography written in English by an Englishman. Since then he and his friends searched longingly for the records and works of Sun Yat Sen and the methods he adopted to uplift his people. And it was from this study that he discovered many ways of serving his people. The methods and the sayings he left behind for the realization of the three principles brought light and inspiration to Bose and his other friends. Afterwards he said with great fervour,



"All of you in China respect Sun Yat Sen as the father of modern China but for us Indians he has a greater importance. He was one of the greatest men of Asia, nay of the whole world. For us Indians what is of most importance is that he was a friend of India, a firm supporter of Indian independence and a strong opponent of British Imperialism. Furthermore, he was a sincere believer in the liberation of Asia and in Asian unity. Following in the footsteps of three great men—C. R. Das a great Indian leader, Sun Yat Sen and Okakura of Japan I am seized and inspired by the idea of Pan-Asian Federation." Next, explaining the trends of his policy since he declared war on Britain and America he said :

"The obstacles for the liberation and unification of Asia are first, the existence of Western Imperialism and secondly the absence of any offer of help to the weaker and smaller countries of Asia by Asians. In this regard the one country which could bear the greater share of the burden was obviously Japan. But till Japan had not openly broken off her relations with European Imperialism, the question of helping Asian brethren had not and could not arise. But the long-awaited opportunity ultimately came when Japan boldly declared war on Britain and America in December 1941. Since then a great change had taken place in Japan. It was not possible to believe this change unless one saw it with one's own eyes. A new consciousness had taken possession of the spirit of the Japanese people. Today's Japan was not the same Japan of five years ago."

In support of his views he cited as examples the recognition of independence of Burma and Philippines, return of Andaman and Nicobar islands to the Provisional Government of Free India and the transfer of western provinces to Thailand.

Going a step further he referred to the adoption of a new policy towards China by Japan and the conclusion of a treaty to implement this new policy. He referred to the offer of restoration of peace between Japan and China and the withdrawal of troops from the Chinese mainland. He said that the point that should be given great importance was that Japan had executed all these policies when she was involved in a life and death struggle.

He came back to his arguments again and again. Apart from objective facts he also spoke from his own subjective experience which proved to be quite persuasive.

He said that ever since he came to East Asia and took up the responsibilities of the Indian Independence League, he had been working in close co-operation with the Japanese. If he had any doubts about their intentions, it would have been absolutely impossible for a nationalist and a revolutionary like him to co-operate with Japan. In the previous few months he had visited Tokyo twice and during this period he had closely moved with the Japanese people, government, army and navy officials and



had mixed freely with the common people and studied their spiritual strength and mental make-up. He had attended their national assembly and talked to the representatives, on November 5 and 6. He attended the Greater East Asia Conference as an observer and witnessed the joint resolution being adopted. He had the opportunity of meeting Japanese leaders, specialists and the public at large at this conference. Thus, he said, from his own experience and by studying the Japanese foreign policy since the outbreak of war in East Asia, he was convinced of Japanese earnestness and sincerity. Based on the righteous principles of nationalism, mutual respect for sovereignty and mutual aid and assistance, preliminary steps had now been taken for the establishment of a new order in Asia. It was the duty of all the Asian peoples to give serious consideration to these matters and carry them out in practice.

His concept of a new order in Asia was based on the above principles and he believed that only on the basis of those principles could the liberation and unity of Asia be brought about. The present cry of Asia was for liberation and unity, he declared. And he warned that if unity did not follow liberation, there was every danger that the liberated peoples would once again be robbed of their liberty or exposed to the imperialistic forces. Again, if unity was not accompanied by liberation, there was the danger that the united peoples would become imperialistic. He said that when we followed the events of the past few years and traced the historical processes, in the case of China or India or the whole of Asia, the trends and conditions were suggestive of a development which was the materialization of the dreams of Sun Yat Sen. He asked : "Here I honestly ask all of you a question—can't you seize this opportunity by leading China, India and Asia for the sake of the liberation and unification of Asia ?"

Bose gave his counsel in such terms with intense feeling. He then advanced a step further and took up the problem of the unity of China. He said that two things which should be secured urgently for the sake of Asian liberation and unity are the unity of China and the freedom of India. The unity of China would have great influence on the freedom movement in India and the recovery of the freedom of India would in turn have a far-reaching effect on West Asia and make the liberation of the oppressed peoples of West Asia possible. At this point he argued that the obstacles and facilities for the freedom movement in India and West Asia were firmly in the hands of Chinese people. Who was obstructing the unity of China ? he asked. Was it Japan ? He answered in the negative and said that he was well aware of Chinese dissatisfaction with Japan in the past and every one knew the causes of Chinese decision to fight Japan.

Unfortunately, his sincere and earnest counsel did not evoke any response from the Chungking Government and history took a direction quite contrary to his expectations. But when we examine his ideas dispassionately,



many besides his friends will be impressed by his splendid stamina and purity of outlook. How do the then Chungking officials, now living in Taiwan without accomplishing anything, think when they read these passages? If we contrast the post-war situation of Asia with what he said, do we not develop a sublime liking for every word of his broadcast?

However, it should be added here that this speech of Bose in any of its parts was never prompted either by the Chungking Government or the Japanese Government. It was completely a product of his own thinking. He was too proud to swerve from the path which he considered to be correct.

Bose again made a radio broadcast from Nanking on November 23 under the title "Second appeal to Chungking". In this, he started by referring to his previous broadcast when he had just arrived in Nanking, the centre of Chinese culture, and how he was disheartened with the division of China. Then he commented on the issue of the movement of Chinese forces towards the Indo-Burmese border. He expressed his strong indignation for the Chungking Government which had joined the British and American camp. His tone was quite severe. Further, the speech contained the current of his political ideas and for those who did not know him this broadcast provides an interesting study.

Analysing the action of the British authorities in replacing the Indian army with the Chinese army near the Indo-Burmese border, he said that in the first place it provided proof of the fact that Britishers did not have any faith in the Indian Army. Secondly, the British plan to use Chinese forces in place of Indian forces, which in fact had been used so long, simply meant that Chinese forces would be used as cannon-fodder. Thirdly, it would lead to a fight between the Indian forces advancing towards their mother country and the Chinese forces. He asked whether any nationalist or patriot should help Chiang Kai Shek with weapons to fight against India which till now had nothing but friendly feelings towards China and Chiang Kai Shek. He warned that if this should come to pass, it would be unpardonable. Pointing out how Chiang Kai Shek helped the British in their attempt to reoccupy Burma, he said that in the eyes of the Burmese and Indians, politically Chiang Kai Shek was seen only as a handmaid and a puppet in the hands of the British Imperialists. Because of this detestable and unrighteous policy India and Burma had lost all faith in the Chinese.

Referring to the visit of Chiang Kai Shek to India in the beginning of 1942, his meeting with the Indian leaders and people and his mistake in demanding that Indians should come to a compromise with the British, Bose said that recognition of Indian independence was the only right and correct policy. He argued with vehemence that if Chiang Kai Shek had any sense of righteousness, fairness, and leadership, at least he should not



have allowed the Chinese forces to stand side by side with the British but should have ordered them to help us in the struggle against the British. His army was a hired army of the British and if Chinese forces should ever fight us, Chiang Kai Shek would never be pardoned.

Recalling his previous broadcast Bose revived the same points again to find peace between Japan and China.

To make it clear that the proposals made in that broadcast and in the previous one were his own, he traced the course of his whole life and showed that whatever the humiliation, ill-treatment, temptation, cajolment, or mental suffering, no external power could make him change his convictions. He said, "Today, I want you to believe me when I say that there is a possibility of an honourable understanding between Japan and China." He also remarked that the entire Indian people desired peace between China and Japan and that Mahatma Gandhi had publicly stated during the previous year that if India were free he would have gone on a mission to bring peace between China and Japan.

Next he refuted the argument that Japan was only playing delaying tactics in her policy towards China, countered all misgivings by giving reasons and expressed full confidence in Japanese policy. He asked China to wake up and share a greater responsibility in the building of a new and free Asia.

Judging the results in the light of his political forecasts, we see that many of them ran counter to what he said and his broadcast from Nanking itself appears as an act in a tragedy. Nevertheless, if we look at them in their entirety, we feel convinced that as a statesman and as a world leader, he had lively and confident ideas.

After completing all official business in Nanking and achieving the main objective of his visit, Bose went to Shanghai on November 11 and gave an inspiring lecture to the Indians there. On November 22, he arrived by air at Manila, the capital of the new Republic of Philippines.

After a courtesy call on the President Mr. Laurel whom he had met at the Greater East Asia Conference and after the usual calls on the Japanese Ambassador, military and naval authorities, he attended a meeting of the overseas Indians and called upon them to work for the Indian Independence Movement. In Shanghai, the previous day, many volunteered for the INA. But they could not be sent to the south because of transport difficulties and so he made arrangements for training those volunteers in Shanghai itself. But in Manila, just like the Indians of French colonies, there were not many volunteers. He therefore exerted all his strength to collect funds for the INA. And on November 25, after 4 weeks of travel, he returned to Singapore.

As soon as he returned to Singapore he plunged into action without any rest. He flew to Jakarta on December 10 to win over the Indians in



Java. At Jakarta, he called on the Japanese military and naval commanders and then delivered an inspiring speech before a gathering of Indian Independence League members to boost the independence movement. Next day he addressed a public meeting in the city theatre hall to rouse the Indian population.

On December 12, he flew to Surabaya and visiting all parts of Borneo and Sumatra he returned soon to Singapore on December 14. Endowed with wonderful energy, his feet trod all corners of East Asia and the two million Indians in this region accepted him as their 'Netaji', obeyed his commands willingly and offered their blood to the INA or gave away their possessions for the independence movement. Though Bose was in high spirits one could see that he often felt the burden of heavy responsibilities.

The Provisional Government of Free India, first at the Greater East Asia Conference and later on by Bose's fast and efficient moves, secured a propaganda advantage both at home and abroad. Particularly his main objective of attacking India received full support. But Bose soon began to have anxious thoughts about its materialization. Many basic conditions were to be fulfilled before the plans of an attack could be implemented. First of all, there was the question, how far had the organization, equipment and training of INA progressed? Secondly, there was the question about internal conditions in India—would anti-British feelings really flare up in India once the INA advanced into Indian territory? Besides, there were other pressing problems of co-ordinating the INA plan with that of the Japanese Army.

As stated earlier, only the numerical strength of the INA had increased but its training was inadequate and its equipment had not arrived yet after all. Further, the officers were inefficient, the quality of any division as a unit was not up to standard and it could not be used as a fighting division as such. Only among the old prisoners-of-war, there were some having good training in guerrilla warfare. These soldiers were sent to Burma and they were also said to have fought actively and bravely. But to march the INA into Indian territory was after all impossible and when that had to be co-ordinated with the Japanese Army, troubles began to arise quite frequently.

Attention was given, even before the arrival of Bose, to the collection of funds, despatching workers and propaganda. But Bose paid particular attention to propaganda and nominated one person as Minister for propaganda in his small cabinet. Bose himself increased the propaganda effect by his activities. One such method was to make use of the radio broadcasting facilities of Tokyo and other places and to request the Japanese air force to scatter his leaflets. The air power of Japan being poor, planes could not however be provided freely for dropping leaflets frequently and this restricted its propaganda effect. But still, Bose was informed by some workers



that leaflets were more effective than bombs in India, even though they were not dropped in large quantities.

Regarding collection of reports about conditions inside India, he would get a telegraphic communication once in two or three months from his friends on the Berlin—Afghan—Tokyo line, and from Bengal there used to be some secret messengers bringing information to the India-Burma border. But two groups which arrived in 1943 settled down till the beginning of next year under the pretext of getting training in wireless operations. Another person who entered Tinsukia defected to the enemy and the training of another, who went to Calcutta, was insufficient. Because of these reasons the results also were small. Around May 1944 a few groups which had received training as spies, were slipped into Ceylon and on to the eastern sea beach from a submarine. Some of them did send messages upto July, but their contents were not highly rated. All the workers to be trained for such intelligence work were hand-picked by Bose himself and they usually required two to three months to be trained. However since Indian officers were not available for training purposes, the result was not as good as expected. Even after all this, of the twelve workers who were slipped from a submarine to carry on sabotage against the enemy, all defected to the enemy and worked for him. Further, the fact that all the persons who defected were Muslims, hurt his theory of harmony among Hindus and Muslims to a considerable extent. Anyway, the Provisional Government tried its best to work in this direction and except for his pride in the power of his propaganda, the other aspects were not of a standard which would create confidence in Bose. Thirdly, the relations between the Provisional Government and the Japanese Army were really a problem of life or death for the various plans of the Provisional Government. The final result, as is well known, ended up in a great tragedy. We shall deal with it in a separate chapter.

### *The Provisional Government of Free India moves to Burma*

On January 7, 1944, the Provisional Government of Free India moved to Rangoon, the capital of Burma. Bose had said that Burma was the spring-board for an attack on India. Now, by transferring the Provisional Government to that country, he took the first step in the move towards his country.

Before he moved to Burma, Bose visited Andaman and Nicobar Islands, the only territory under his jurisdiction. He left Singapore, with fine recollections, of that birthplace of the Provisional Government, and arrived at Port Blair in Andaman island on December 29, 1943. The next day he visited the interior of the islands, paid a courtesy call on the Japanese military authorities and then addressed a public meeting. He told them



that they had been rescued from a disgraceful period of history and assured them that he would work for the improvement of the islands. Then he assigned a senior officer, A. D. Logonadan to take over the administration of the island and hoisted the tricolour flag in a corner of this so-called crystal islands oppressed so long by the British administration.

Following this he arrived in Rangoon along with a number of Indians via Bangkok, after a secret understanding had been reached with the Thai Government.

At the Mingaladon airport, Prime Minister Ba Maw together with a number of Burmese officials, the Indian army which had arrived earlier, office-bearers of the Indian Independence League, the Japanese Ambassador Renzo Sawada and others received him in very grand style. This historic occasion of the transfer of the government was of great emotional content. Bose immediately proclaimed this move to Burma as a first step in the war of liberation and expressed his deep gratitude to the Burmese and Japanese authorities for their help in the transfer of the Government.

Right from the beginning Bose wanted to establish the Provisional Government in Burma. Because of various compelling reasons, he decided to do so in Singapore. Since then conditions had changed. Among them the most important development was the decision of the Japanese Army to push its attack in the direction of India.

After the outbreak of war in the Far East, the Japanese South Army carried out its main operations in the direction of Malaya and the drive towards Burma had brought glorious victories. By April of 1942, practically the whole of Burma—commencing from the Salween river and Yunan province in the east to the Indian Ocean in the west, from Fukon province in the north to Akyab in the South—had come under Japanese occupation. The internal administration of the country had been reorganized and the same year by August Burma had been declared independent. Japanese forces were preparing defensive positions against the British and guarding the healthy growth of the newly independent country. This was the situation when the Provisional Government of Free India was established. But before it could settle down in Burma, a number of disturbing factors were causing concern.

After the mopping up operations had been completed in Burma, the 15th Army which was used for this purpose was also to be employed for mounting an attack on India. This plan was studied at the headquarters of the South Army of Japan at Singapore and forwarded to the Imperial headquarters for their opinion. About this time what was called the drive to the Mediterranean by the German armies took place in the European theatre of war and there was an idea that Japan and Germany would close in on the Indian Ocean. Besides, the Imperial headquarters had other objectives also. The Iwaguro Kikan, about which we have already spoken,



was making preparations for employing the trained INA forces in some military operations and a section of that liaison organisation was stationed in Rangoon helping the organization of Indians in Burma and working on secret propaganda work to be carried out inside India. But the Burmese attitude in Burma towards the Indian activities was not good at all and the Japanese military commander at that time did not pay due attention to this problem.

Meanwhile, in the autumn of 1942, a re-examination of the India operations in Burma was made by the Japanese front line units. As a result of this re-examination they found that there was not enough military strength, supplies were lacking and the attitude of Indians not helpful. Because of all these reasons there were anxious thoughts about the outcome of any offensive mounted on India as conceived by the South Army headquarters at Singapore and by the Iwaguro Kikan. So the plan for an offensive against India came to a complete stop for a while. The advisability of launching an offensive was frequently debated at that time in the Japanese Army and they wondered how under such adverse circumstances the plan could be implemented if they were really asked to proceed with the offensive.

Very soon, British forces which had retreated in the face of Japanese attack recovered and started counter-attacking in every direction. Even the capital city of Rangoon came under the enemy's air attack. Further, since the autumn of 1942 the guerrilla operations led by Wingate began to give a lot of trouble in northern Burma continuously and persistently. The enemy with the purpose of recapturing the Akyab region also counter-attacked there. The Japanese Army reacted to it only in January 1943 by deploying strong forces to retain that strategic region. Thus, in spite of our efforts to keep as much of important territory in our hands as possible, the rapid success of the enemy made our attempts look ridiculous. Moreover, a Chinese division under the command of Stilwell was concentrated in Assam and it became clear that the enemy was trying to open a road connecting the upper part of Burma with the Yunan province of China. It also became clear from intelligence reports that an efficient Chinese division was being trained under American auspices. Enemy attack from the sea also gained strength and could not be left out of consideration.

On the other hand, increasing enemy action provided an opportunity to the Iwaguro Kikan to press for its policy of an India offensive. Eventually the strength of our forces in Burma was expanded, though at a slow pace, from one division to three divisions and then to ten divisions. On April 3, 1943 all these units were brought under the unified command of General Kawanuma and the old 15th Army of Burma was also placed under him.

Faced with the enemy's counter attack from three sides and with only



a small army—at that time there were only four divisions—and fighting strictly defensive battles, it was inevitable that there should be breaches in our defences. As a consequence, the attitude of the Burmese who were cooperating with the Japanese Army so far was bound to change. There was only one way to cope with the situation—to counter-attack the enemy in one selected, absolutely important front, occupy a strategic area, draw the main enemy strength to that area and bomb it out there.

This strategy against the enemy obviously emanated from the 15th Army which was facing the enemy directly. This strategy was given full and serious consideration by Commander Mutaguchi who had previously given the opinion that the India offensive should be dropped altogether. Even to implement this strategy there was not the necessary infantry strength, our air power was very weak and the most worrying problem was that of supplies. When this and other problems were examined seriously, there was first a difference of opinion among the local authorities and later among the higher officers of the Command. First, they expected an enemy counter-attack in strength in the South East Pacific. The Imperial headquarters was thinking of strengthening the defences on the Chinese mainland near Hankow. They also thought of other plans. Finally, it was decided that the strategic plan of the India offensive should be approved. It took days and months before they could arrive at this decision.

While discussions were going on endlessly about the India offensive plan between the South Army headquarters and the Imperial headquarters, the strength of the enemy counter-attack increased considerably. And retaining even the then existing defensive line became very difficult. Orders to proceed with the plan for the offensive arrived in January 1944, the final blow to be delivered at Imphal.

It was further decided that the offensive operations should start on March 10. The month of March in Burma meant that the dry season would continue for another two months. Since the decision was delayed by two months the preparations also were delayed and inevitably the actual offensive came to a miserable end.

In the complicated development of the strategic plan, the problem of co-ordinating plans with the INA only added more delicate issues.

Relations between the INA and the Japanese Army in Burma had not yet developed. In March 1943 Lieut. General Kawanuma, who was commanding the Burma Army, was instructed by Prime Minister Tojo, just before he (Kawanuma) left for Burma to assume charge, that the Japanese Government wanted the Burmese operations "to set up a base for protecting the development of Indian independence". Kawanuma himself had privately expressed the same feelings in this regard.

After his arrival in Rangoon, Kawanuma met the Iwaguro Kikan officer, came to an agreement with him and then he received the local



commander of the INA in May. It also became known that Bose would soon be leaving for the Burma Front. All these factors turned the Japanese plan into one of military and political warfare. After studying the various aspects of the situation the commander started making necessary preparations. First, it was necessary, that in case the Provisional Government moved to Burma, all arrangements be made by the military. Kawanuma decided that he himself would take care of this. But he had the difficult task of getting the Burmese on his side for such preparations. Our preparations for the offensive developed strains at various points ; in addition, the problem of how to co-ordinate our plans with those of the Provisional Government became an important issue. In other words, though feelings in India were anti-British, it could not be inferred that we could expect them to be pro-Japanese. Therefore, how to tackle such a situation and help the independence movement led by Bose, and especially the INA became a problem. Meanwhile, to satisfy Indians that Japan sincerely supported the Indian Independence Movement, the Japanese wanted to hand over even that small piece of territory, Andaman and Nicobar, to the Provisional Government. Thus in the military struggle between Japan and England, Bose represented a fusion of both the military and political elements from the Indian standpoint.

In the task of reconstruction of Burma there was a demand for an active anti-Indian policy. And if the independence of Burma was allowed to develop on the lines of the declaration of Burmese independence, in a way it would become anti-Indian. At the same time an impression had to be given outside that Burmese and Indians were presenting a 'united front' against the British. Moreover, the INA had to be deployed after fitting it into the overall plan of the offensive if Japan was to win in that war. But since the INA did not have scouting units, special task forces and reserves, it had to be used only in guerrilla warfare. These and so many other problems had to be studied thoroughly.

But when the Indian offensive became a pressing issue, the Army Command in Burma studied the offensive purely from the point of view of military success. It did not have the mental flexibility to also consider a policy for India.

In spite of that the army gave some thought to the military and political obstacles in fitting INA into the overall offensive operations in India. The commander was toying with this idea in his mind. The Japanese military had thought that any inclusion of the INA, apart from its political propaganda effect, as a regular fighting unit along with their own army was an encumbrance.

However, Bose visited Rangoon towards the end of July and the commander met him to discuss the delicate questions. He told Bose that he had great respect for him and that he could very well appreciate his love



of India. He told him also how he himself felt when Tojo asked him to take over the command in Burma. He was selected for the task because he was personally convinced of the political and military significance of the offensive operations in Burma. Then he explained to Bose tactfully the line of action the War Council would follow regarding the INA and elicited from Bose the policy that the Provisional Government would follow in future. Bose at that time was somewhat irritated with the Hikari Kikan and had expected something different by direct contact with the military. He expressed himself very frankly and told the commander about his own hopes. Bose said that after a long political career he ultimately decided to fight the British out by making use of this world war and by joining hands with any country opposing Britain. He said sorrowfully that it was for this reason that he had to part company with the revered Gandhi. He then said that any one front in the offensive against India should be allotted to the INA, because for them it was going to be a revolutionary march. Secondly, the international situation was such that the war would drag on for a long time. That being so, he would gradually improve the training of his excellent soldiers ; and thirdly, the war situation was not going well for the Axis powers and Indians were bewildered. It might even be that they would rush into a compromise with the British. Therefore, this was the time to come to a quick decision. If it was delayed the chances were that people would be weaned away towards the enemy. Fourthly, the only way to stop this was to set up the Provisional Government within the frontiers of India. By marching ahead rapidly they would be absorbing all the elements inside India. If Japan came to the assistance of the Provisional Government at that time, he said, his Government would in turn assist Japan in future.

The plans for the India offensive to be carried out by the Burma Army of Japan was completely confidential at that time and the military authorities did not have the chance to explain their viewpoint as against the proposals of Bose. Thus these negotiations ended only with verbal promises. But his request for help to realize his bold plans did not really evoke any response at that time.

In Bose's opinion, great importance had to be attached to the selection of a place for commencing the attack on India. It was his scheme since his Berlin days that Chittagong should be the first target in any attack on India. When Singapore was occupied, he met Ambassador Oshima to enquire where the Burmese operations would begin. At that time he stressed very strongly that the drive should continue upto Chittagong so that the whole of India was thrown into disorder when Chittagong fell to the Japanese. He also sought the opinion of the Imperial headquarters about his plan. Probably he thought that Bengal was the birthplace of Indian revolution and the strategic place which could throttle Bengal was



Chittagong. Even after he had arrived in East Asia he steadfastly adhered to that view.

But from the standpoint of the Japanese Army in Burma, Chittagong could not be a major military objective since as a port it was exposed to attacks both by the navy and air force. From the point of view of supplies also it would present a great problem. Thus, Bose's idea and the opinion of the Japanese Army could not be reconciled.

In spite of all that, knowing Bose's character and personality and considering the political and military implications, in the beginning of August the South Army once again started studying how they could accommodate Bose's ideas into their own general strategy which went by the name of 'Operation U'.

As a result of the study, a new plan emerged according to which the extreme left flank of the 15th Army which was in charge of the Operation-U being an area south of a certain point of the front would be entrusted to the INA. The idea was to form a wedge here and attack Chittagong which was Bose's main target. The main force of the INA was to move from this place in support of the main forces of the 15th Army. The special task force in co-operation with the armoured division which was to confront the enemy's counter-attack would at the same time utilize the INA to supplement the regrouping of forces in the battlefield. Preparing a rough plan on these lines, they presented it to the Indian side unofficially.

Thus, though the proposals for the redeployment of the forces were prepared, a number of obstacles began to appear in shifting the Provisional Government to Burma. Since the plans for carrying out the India offensive were almost final and the problem of participation of the INA in these operations was also resolved, the Japanese Army in Burma decided to take the first step, remove the obstacles and help Bose. From the Commander-in-Chief downwards, all the officers of the army and even Ambassador Sawada who had assumed office since the declaration of independence for Burma persuaded the Burmese Government and secured its consent to station the Provisional Government of Free India temporarily on its territory.

But a number of other big and small problems came up with it. One of them was regarding the establishment of the Indian National Bank. Bose had an idea of starting a paper currency of his own after the bank was established. But the Government of Burma was opposed to it and the plan fell through afterwards. Next, there was the problem of the release of military criminals imprisoned in Burma. Those among the Indians and the Japanese who were sympathetic to these criminals were not few. Then, following the arrival of the INA in Burma, all sorts of negotiations took place between the INA and the Japanese Army in connection with the problem of salute. Among the Japanese soldiers there was a tendency to



look upon the Indian soldiers as old prisoners of war. There was a history of painful bloodshed on the same issue before equal salute was established between Indian and British armies. Therefore Bose stressed that there should be equal salute between the Japanese and INA forces. Besides, he argued that they were co-operating in a common war operation and so it was all the more necessary that there should be equality in the salute formalities. But there were all sorts of problems in arriving at a solution. At any rate, it was decided to concede to Bose's assertion. We have to record that the mediation efforts made by Maruyama Goro, a monk of the Nichiren sect in this connection were very helpful.

The next important issue was that of the right of command. We have tried to shed some light on this in the previous chapter. Bose, because of his intense sense of equality and independence, argued stoutly and vehemently in the same way as he did regarding the issue of salute. The Japanese Army instead of letting him have his own way also made the negotiations very difficult. Finally they arrived at a settlement regarding the power of command over the INA forces by Japanese officers above the Corps Commander grade. The Indian side refused to permit similar rights for lesser officers. They avoided the issue by proposing a provisional decision to the effect that they should be guided by the exigencies of the military situation.

Again there was the other problem regarding the application of criminal laws. It was decided in principle that for those who violated Japanese military law, the same law should apply. But in actual practice it turned out that the Indian side created its own military codes because of the evasive interpretation of the agreement.

Regarding the curtailment of the power of the Japanese military police and their relations with the INA soldiers, Bose passionately contended the Japanese military police were hateful and the Indian people and the Indian Army feared them equally. He refused to let them exercise any power over Indian soldiers and Indian people. At last after prolonged negotiations he agreed that they might exercise extremely restricted powers under extremely necessary defensive situations. He was satisfied when the Japanese also agreed that even these restricted powers would not be exercised by lowgrade gendarmerie.

Since it was also known that propaganda was Bose's most powerful weapon of war, the Japanese Army appreciated this point very well and managed to secure Burma's permission for independent broadcasts by INA and the Provisional Government. Thus this demand was met completely.

If we go on recounting, there will be a long procession of miscellaneous problems. Briefly put, the Japanese Army in Burma from top to bottom trusted Bose's excellent character wholeheartedly. And all officers and men poured out their heart and blood to help Bose carry on with his struggle



for the realisation of his dream of independence. They tried their best to accommodate Bose's plans into their own plans of India offensive and to secure facilities for the transfer of the Provisional Government to Burma.

Subhas Chandra Bose who arrived in Rangoon on January 7 as the head of the Provisional Government of Free India appeared in military uniform the same evening at the residence of Japanese Commander-in-chief for a dinner given in his honour. Those who accompanied him were Capt. Luxmi, the Secretary-General Sahay and some others. On the Japanese side the Ambassador Mr. Sawada was present. Bose appeared somewhat tired but was the picture of dauntlessness and honesty. Raising his voice with some effort he explained the reasons for the transfer of the Provisional Government to Burma and then said, "My only prayer to the Almighty at this moment is that we may be given the earliest opportunity to pay for our freedom with our own blood" The whole assembly was choked with emotion as he ended his speech.

He utilised all possible means to see that the transfer of the Provisional Government to Burma had its repercussions inside India. In a special article he contributed to 'Azad Hind' on January 17, he dealt in a wonderful way on the theme : 'March Forward'. In that article he recalled the progress of Indian Independence Movement during the second world war outside India. He set out nine progressive stages for the attainment of independence. He wrote that their historic assault on Delhi, the ultimate goal is the tenth final stage of our march. It is not the fighting armies of INA alone which would break through the India-Burma border. All those who had helped the INA in any way, all those who had worked for the Indian Independence Movement in any way would follow the INA.

On January 21 the Indian Provisional Government celebrated the third month of its establishment. By its transfer to Burma with Bose as its head, the revolutionary fervour of the Provisional Government of Free India went up. Bose declared that the two mountain ranges of Arakan and Chin would be used as spring-boards for the assault on Delhi. On February 7, he declared as the Commander-in-chief of INA that all the deceitful fabrications of the enemy would soon be shattered in the light of true facts. Admitting that there had been some delay in the plan of action, he ridiculed the British for the panic they displayed when the Provisional Government was transferred to Burma in the beginning of the year. He added that Britain which no longer could conceal the existence of the Provisional Government and INA from Indians was now saying that there was now only an attempt to form them. He would leave it to coming march of events to falsify such propaganda and proceeded to proclaim as follows :

"We shall act according to plan in future in carrying out our solemn oath of liberating our motherland. We have absolute faith in our ally Japan and we have firm and unbounded faith in ultimate victory."



About a month after the transfer of his Provisional Government Bose heard of the death of Kasturba, the wife of Gandhi. In the face of this tragic event his soul cried out for revenge against the British. He said :

"I pay my humble tribute to the memory of the great lady who was a mother to the Indian people, and I wish to express my deepest sympathy for Gandhiji in his bereavement. I had the privilege of coming into frequent personal contact with Shrimati Kasturba,.....She was the ideal of Indian womanhood, strong, patient, silent, self-reliant . ...Since the days of the South African Satyagraha she shared with her great husband the trials and sufferings which have been their lot for nearly 30 years now. Her many imprisonments seriously impaired her health, but jails held no terrors for her even in her 74th year .....The British were determined to see that Kasturba died of heart disease in custody under the very eyes of her husband. They have had their criminal desire fulfilled and it is nothing short of murder..... As long as the British remain in India these atrocities against our nation will continue unchecked. There is only one way in which the sons and daughters of India can avenge the death of Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi and that is by the complete destruction of the British Empire in India."

His activities had another side also. As an expression of gratitude for the warm and abundant help given by the Japanese nation to the cause of Indian independence, he presented five sea planes for military use to Japan in January. Again in March, as an expression of gratitude for the help and co-operation given by the Government of Thailand and its people for the cause of Indian Independence he presented one million bahts to that government through the Thai branch of Indian Independence League. These and similar acts were no doubt an expression of his sincere feelings. At the same time he wanted to impress upon the people of India and abroad that the financial base of his Provisional Government was firmly established.

### *The INA crosses into India.*

In January 1944, when Bose's Provisional Government moved to Burma, the Japanese Army was making brisk preparations for the Battle of Imphal in every direction. In the Western Front, a bitter fight developed when our 15th Army went into attack in response to the enemy's counter-attack in the Akyab region. In spite of strong attacks by our army, the enemy increased its forces and retained its offensive power and the fate of the battle remained uncertain. With a view to drawing out and pinning down the main enemy strength, in the interest of our Imphal campaign, our armies maintained strong pressure near the Bengal border against an enemy who boasted of having superior power. In the north near Kukon



province, Lt. Col. Stilwell had announced that the red road to China was ready, the army trained by him was dangerously strong and was advancing south step by step in that area against our 18th Division. In the east on the left bank of a river the Chinese army was trained and organized on American lines to start a drive towards the west.

The enemy air power increased at a fast pace as the days went by and in spite of our best efforts to increase our air force, the vast military imbalance exposed our entire army in Burma to enemy air raids. All the air, water and land communications in Burma, the distant railtrack under construction in Thailand and even the ships engaged in fishing were menaced by enemy airpower.

Even under such circumstances, facing all sorts of difficulties, the preparations for the Imphal offensive progressed secretly and two field command headquarters and a number of divisions were moved to Burma. Only the 15th Division which was on its way to join the 15th Army had to walk all the distance as its vehicles broke down. When it did join the 15th Army it was still panting for breath. But the offensive was to commence very soon. Thus preparations for the offensive were not all smooth going.

The Japanese Army along with the INA quickened its advance with all the strength at its disposal. But this did not satisfy Bose and he repeated his old demands. His real intention was to stand by the INA and personally command two divisions all by himself in a chosen battle front and lead the advance into India. This ambition of his could not after all be fulfilled from the point of view of the Japanese Army. And however much they might wish to let him have his way, on strictly military considerations they could not let him operate near the main front of the battle. The Japanese Army and the Hikari Kikan tried their best to convince him about this.

Towards the end of the previous year, as a result of organizational changes, the Hikari Kikan was incorporated into the newly enlarged "Headquarters of the South Army's Guerrilla Division." Lt. General Isoda who had earlier taken charge of the army and the Hikari Kikan increased the guerrilla fighting force at the insistence of the centre and commenced guerrilla activities with full vigour.

The main section of the Hikari Kikan still continued its earlier functions and now became a divisional headquarters in itself and moved to Rangoon about the same time as the Provisional Government. It continued to deal with the Provisional Government as before but in addition, it looked after the command of guerrilla warfare.

However, in consideration of Bose's desires and also with a view to creating a proper atmosphere for joint operations of the Japanese army and the INA, a committee of Japanese, Burmese and Indian staff officers under Japanese chairmanship was formed. At the meetings of this committee,



all the three countries brought up important and necessary military questions and maintained mutual contact throughout the preparatory phase of the Imphal offensive and harmonized their plans. Bose himself along with the Japanese Commander in Burma or with the Burmese Defense Minister used to attend such meetings frequently as an observer.

Among the main issues before the committee, there was in the first place the problem of the transfer of INA troops first from Singapore to Burma and later to the war front. Secondly, there were matters which arose from the encampment of INA forces in Burma and the last and most important issue before the committee was about the relations between the Provisional Government and the Japanese Army after Manipur was captured.

Regarding the first problem, since there was a delay of about one year in the movement of Japanese reinforcements to Burma and the INA had carried out the transfer of its troops smoothly, it was inevitable that the INA should be given prominence in any operations against India from Burma. But it disturbed Bose when there were any obstacles in the way of fulfilment of his chief mission.

Regarding the second point i.e. about the stationing of INA troops in Burma, it cannot be said that it was looked upon with favour by the Burmese authorities. Only Mr. Pibul of Thailand went out in full support and made preparations to build barracks for the Indian army in Thailand. In contrast the Prime Minister of Burma Ba Maw had all sorts of theories about the Indian problem. In spite of the friendship between Ba Maw and Bose at the personal level, the general feeling of antipathy towards Indians among the Burmese compelled the Burmese Government to take an unfriendly attitude towards them.

The meeting which dealt with the policy after the takeover of Manipur is too tragic to recount here. But considering the importance attached to the establishment of the first administrative region under Bose's jurisdiction and to work out principles for harmonious co-operation in the joint offensive, the Japanese stuck to the main decision, that is to respect the rights of Indians in India completely. The Japanese were to place all the occupied areas under the control of the INA as they advanced into Indian territory. All matters of law and order were to be dealt with by the INA and even the capture of arms was to be carried out with the permission of Provisional Government. All the time the Japanese army was to concentrate on military matters only. The meeting also decided that these agreements should be announced to Indians in India and abroad. An agreement to this effect was concluded between the Commander of the 15th division and Bose. On this occasion also there were certain persons who differed on some points. One such point was as to who should be the chairman of the joint committee of the occupying armies. The Indian side naturally asserted



that Bose should be the chairman. After the Japanese Army and the Provisional Government of Free India had approved it, the Japanese front line army insisted on having its commander as the chairman and the matter ended without arriving at any agreement. This led to some suspicion regarding the intentions of the front line army.

In anticipation of the drive to Manipur, all preparations to carry the organization of the Provisional Government into India were made. All necessary technical personnel for the restoration of street lamps, reconstruction of buildings, etc were arranged. The preparations progressed, with the help of the Hikari Kikan, even to the extent of procuring good crop seeds. In organising the whole affair, the staff grew into a very large unit.

Subsequently, in spite of the hurdless mentioned above, preparations for the Imphal offensive progressed steadily. Thus in the beginning of March the three divisions of the 15th Army almost wiped out the enemy with a frontal attack on the left bank of the river Chindwin. The 31st Division protecting the extreme right flank and the main force of the 15th Division from the eastern side and the 33rd division on the left flank which had crossed the Chindwin river a week earlier—all advanced on Kohima and were grouping themselves near Manipur awaiting orders for further advance.

The INA also under Bose's command co-operated with the Japanese armies to further its own plans. A section of INA in concert with the 23rd Division forming the left flank advanced on Haka to break through the defences in that area while another INA Division led by an efficient and intelligent officer called Kiani—in co-operation with a flank of the 15th Division—was ordered to strike in the Manipur area. Thus the INA reached the very advanced positions of the battle since leaving Singapore and passing through Burma.

Bose himself inspected and inspired all the troops as they passed through Rangoon to the war front. An incident that occurred during these days should be recorded here. One day, after the troop inspection ceremony was over, all the soldiers were shouting "To Delhi, To Delhi" "Glory to Netaji" etc. loudly as if the noise would shake heaven and earth. Then when the march past was going on, suddenly the air raid warning was sounded. Soon ten enemy aeroplanes came over and started attacking. The entire Burmese staff present at the ceremony took to their heels screaming. But Bose who was on the platform, calmly called on his staff and allotted duties. After seeing to it that the orders were carried out, he calmly departed from the troop inspection stand. There was not a single person who did not feel concerned and worried as to what might happen to the leader of the Indian Independence Movement.

The offensive took the enemy by surprise and in spite of difficulties in crossing the river Chindwin, it was carried out successfully. The first army



group dashed forward to break through the Indo-Burmese border with extraordinary speed. It broke through at 9-30 p.m. on March 15, 1944.

About a month prior to this, in the beginning of February, an INA detachment under Colonel Sahgal had created a breach in Haka-Falam region and had rushed on to the Indo-Burma border.

Thus an army group commanded by Bose set foot on Indian soil, though of course he was somewhat delayed according to the original schedule. The main Japanese force also, fighting in difficult terrain and against wretched weather, defeated the obstinate resistance of the enemy on March 22, 1944 and broke through the India-Burma border and advanced from the north and west to encircle Imphal.

Bose did not miss this opportunity of a break-through across the Indo-Burmese border to hurl his special missile—the projectile of propaganda. His declaration of March 22 from Rangoon caused consternation among his enemies in the east and the west. His burning faith in his cause reached its fullest expression in this declaration.

In response to the call of Subhas Chandra Bose, Prime Minister Tojo made an announcement from the Japanese side clarifying that all areas of India occupied as a result of Japanese advance would be placed under the jurisdiction of the Provisional Government. We quote the main points : “.....The purpose of Imperial Japan is to destroy the power of the enemy and to transfer the whole of India to Indian hands. All areas occupied in the course of Japanese advance will be immediately placed under the administration of the Provisional Government of Free India. I shall expect that the patriotic Indian people will welcome the advancing armies of INA, that the liberated areas will rapidly grow larger and larger and complete independence will come.

The independence of India is the common desire of all Asia and it is in keeping with world conscience,..I sincerely hope and pray that the Indian soldiers will be able to overcome all difficulties and fighting unitedly continue their advance on the road to victory. I once again declare to the world that Imperial Japan is firmly resolved to make all efforts to help in this task.”

Bose replied to this announcement immediately expressing his gratitude to Japan.

When we consider the declarations of these two persons in a historical perspective, two points engage our attention. First, the main offensive came to have a tremendous political significance and thus the offensive which was apparently a purely military affair assumed a special character. Secondly, in accordance with the policy Japan had pursued since the beginning of the war and to remove any misunderstanding due to enemy propaganda, the areas which she had secured through military victory were all vacated and formally handed over to the successor governments.



Its intention was to harmonize the actions and policy of the military and the government. This was most clearly seen in the relations with Subhas Chandra Bose when the Indian occupied territories in India were instantly transferred.

In the month of April, the Japanese advance was rapid. In the north the strategic town of Kohima fell into our hands quickly in the battle fought by our 31st Division. As to Imphal, the main strength of the 15th Army attacked from the north and another detachment from the same army in co-operation with Kiani's INA troops attacked from Palel in the East. The 33rd division moved from the south. In this way Manipur was encircled.

At this juncture, Bose fired his second propaganda projectile. This declaration of April 4 followed the development of the war situation. He explained once again the stand of the Provisional Government regarding the advance into Indian territory and about reorganisation of administration. It said,

".....The Provisional Government of Azad Hind, your own Government has only one mission to fulfil. That mission is to expel the Anglo-American armies from the sacred soil of India by armed force and then bring about the establishment of a permanent National Government of Azad Hind, in accordance with the will of the Indian people ..... The Provisional Government of Azad Hind will continue the armed struggle until the Anglo-American forces are annihilated or expelled from India. While prosecuting the armed struggle the Provisional Government of Free India will push on with the work of reconstruction of the liberated areas. The Provisional Government of Azad Hind is the only lawful Government of the Indian people. The Provisional Government calls upon the Indian people in the liberated areas to render all assistance and cooperation to the Indian National Army and to the civilian officials appointed by the Provisional Government....." Continuing, Bose guaranteed safety of life and property in the liberated areas and warned that those who assisted the enemy or caused damage to any work being carried on by the Provisional Government would be punished severely. Especially he stressed that he acknowledged the unstinted and unconditional assistance of Japan. He also repeated that in co-operation with the armies of Japan the INA had scored victories over the enemy and that Japan had no ambitions of her own in India. Bose added that owing to the rapid development of the war situation, there was no time to arrange for an independent currency of the Provisional Government. It had therefore to use the Japanese currency as a temporary measure. That currency would be withdrawn from circulation as soon as the Provisional Government's own currency was available.

Just about the time of this announcement Bose appointed the then Finance Minister of his government, Major General Chatterjee as the



Governor of the newly liberated areas. Along with Bose's declaration, Prime Minister Ba Maw of Burma also made an important broadcast to the world. In that broadcast he explained the historic significance of the success of the Indian offensive. Especially he praised the daring enterprise of the advance into India by the INA and, stressing its physical and psychological significance, he said that it was the event of the century. Further, the Indians and Burmese who had always been defeated by British military power themselves helped British military power to appear supreme. He also pointed out that in the background of that historic achievement, there was the cumulative strength of the Burmese people also. It was about this time that an aeroplane was presented to Bose by the Japanese Government.

On April 5 Bose moved to Maymyo leading a section of his government. The 15th Army was stationed at this place. This transfer to Maymyo helped him, to a certain extent, to fulfil his ambition to lead the front line armies. But since the later developments in the war situation went contrary to his expectations and also because there were difficulties in carrying out his regular functions, he soon withdrew to Rangoon leaving a section of his government behind.

About this time difficulties arose in Tokyo regarding the recognition of this Provisional Government as the formal government of India. The Japanese Government asked for some clarifications on this point from Bose. He replied that he was resolved to drop the word "Provisional", would call his government the Government of Free India and was quite obstinate about it. The Japanese Government proposed that if Bose's Government decided to enter Indian territory after the success of the Imphal offensive it should do so according to regular international formalities and announce it before the world properly and undertake so many other tasks before it was recognised as the formal government. But Bose frankly stated that he would retain the wartime structure of his government until the tri-colour flag was hoisted in Delhi. The Japanese Army in Burma understood his problems and sent a report to Imperial headquarters for their opinion.

On April 8, the Imperial Headquarters made the following announcement regarding the Burma war situation :

"Our new armies together with the INA have captured the Kohima area which is strategically situated on the road to Imphal and Dimapur. On the early morning of April 6 our attack against the enemy air force near Katta was carried out successfully."

This Imperial announcement made the Japanese very happy. One of the reasons was that it was a historic fact in that the Japanese armies had marched into India and secondly, the INA in co-operation with our army was able to advance into their own land. Furthermore, the overall war situation for Japan at that time being unsatisfactory, the significance of



the success at Imphal was considered to be extraordinary. And so everyone paid special attention to such events and hopes and expectations were aroused as a result of it. It also boosted the fighting spirit of the people.

When the Japanese Government and the Provisional Government of India were feeling jubilant, there was in fact an area of gloom even in the rear of the Imphal front.

The story is placed a month before that time.

On may 5, sometime after orders to advance on the Chindwin river was given to the main force of the 15th Army, a group of 12 large enemy aeroplanes suddenly appeared through the evening darkness and passed over the front line of the 15th Army. The planes continued their flight to the east and dashed towards the area between Myitkina and Mandalay, where we had our paved roads of communication. The enemy planes had come from the air field near Kasa or Katta. To the 15th Army which was oblivious of everything apart from preparing for the offensive, there was not any surplus power with which it could fight back the enemy air power. The enemy planes destroyed a part of the paved road near *Maur* and struck against the artery in the north which connected the 18th Division and also destroyed its camp. After that it gave battle to the other troops which were attacking in that area.

The appearance of this air force was clearly a heavy blow to our armies in Burma. But this apparently did not have any bad effect on our 15th Army which was resolutely fighting its offensive battle. It was even decided that the 15th Army should carry out its offensive operations doggedly unmindful of the enemy air power. But the strength of our forces in Burma was miserably small and they did not have the means to patch up the loopholes during this one month. They also failed to destroy the enemy air power. It was only much later that the enemy air power was fought back with the newly arrived 53rd Division.

The Burmese and Indians were highly susceptible to the effects of enemy air power. Only Subhas Bose was unshaken. Perhaps even God would recognize that his faith sprung from the depth of his soul.

It was not just that there was a wide gulf between the enemy's and our air power. Its effect was felt in so many other areas. Our bases of attack and our preparations for the offensive were exposed to the enemy planes on land and water during the day as well as in the night. The enemy sent men and materials to its defensive forces passing over our encircling armies near Imphal at great speed by air. Looking up at these planes with bloodless eyes our soldiers clenched their fists in desperate hatred. In this way such places near Imphal which had no defenses at all at the beginning of the war were gradually fortified by the enemy. The Japanese Army which planned its offensive on the element of surprise had no alternative but to



carry out the assault with all the strength it could muster since the element of surprise was lost. However, the army was not prepared for it. The offensive gradually came to a halt. The rainy season arrived at the Indo-Burma border. Intermittent rains destroyed the supply routes, ruined the health of our soldiers and quite frequently our attacks came to nothing again and again.

It was about this time that soldiers of Kiani's division fighting in the front lines on the Palel front, defeated the enemy. Even otherwise, Bose who had always desired to lead the forward lines demanded that he himself should be allowed to go to the front and control the soldiers. But the Japanese Commander was definitely against it and Subhas Bose had to give up the attempt, feeling quite bitter about it. He had to send some other persons.

The inconsiderateness of the commander in charge of the operations at that time is quite natural. He changed the divisional heads, changed the points of attack several times and in fact exhausted all means in planning a strategy for advance. The front line troops and later the reserve troops also made the most splendid efforts. Fighting the enemy and the vagaries of nature, they grappled with death itself. Unfortunately, the tide of the war was not in our favour.

The Commander-in-chief of all the forces in Burma, who inspected the forward positions for more than 10 days towards the end of May facing the rigours of rain, was downcast. After returning to Rangoon, memories of those of our soldiers who were in their camps in that ghastly weather, of Kiani with whom he shook hands and the soldiers of the INA who were manning the forward posts so steadfastly still floated before his mind's eye. On the other hand, a number of telegrams from the South Army and from Tokyo told of the anxious expectations as to the outcome of the Imphal offensive. If the Commander-in-chief could have had his way, he would have ordered a halt to that offensive. But he was to carry on as long as even a single hand that could strike remained. He had to carry on. He commented bitterly : 'In this war there is a collaboration of two countries, India and Japan. Let us give all support to Commander Mutaguchi who is in charge of the offensive and then we shall commit double suicide with Bose.'

The Commander-in-chief of Japanese armies in Burma met Bose at his headquarters and discussed the situation at the front. Bose offered to meet the pressing needs of the front line by sending all the remaining INA forces including the Women's Regiment. He also told him that according to recent information from Singapore, there would not be any bad effect on the morale of the Indian people even if the war dragged on a little longer. They were prepared to tolerate it because they had before them the great objective of independence. Further, he indicated his firm resolve to march



ahead shoulder to shoulder with Japan till ultimate victory was achieved. When Bose said these words the Commander-in-chief was deeply mortified.

Ignoring the development of the war situation, Bose started to plan in detail to enlarge the activities of his government. He wanted to see his declaration implemented in clear and concrete terms. He set down that the area of activity would be divided into three spheres. The first one was East Asia which would continue to be the political and military base as before. The second sphere consisted of the liberated areas. Here the main task was to make preparations for the establishment of administration and reconstruction as promised. The third sphere was India under enemy occupation, which was to be liberated.

According to the requirement of the above three spheres, ministers and counsellors with clear responsibilities were to be organized in three squads and kept in their respective areas.

The first squad or group would supervise the activities in East Asia and they would be called 'Members of the Cabinet for East Asia.' They would be supported with men, finance and resources to a certain extent now and were to be further strengthened in future. This was to be done either by establishing a new administrative wing or by expanding the already existing department. The existing finance department was to be expanded and its sphere of activity enlarged. A new department of 'workers' was also to be established, in which recruits for the INA, the Women's Regiment, department of reconstruction in liberated areas and for the independence movement were to be organised and the necessary training given.

The supplies division which had been established only recently was also to be expanded. And all the important responsibilities were to be entrusted to the finance, workers' and supplies departments. The East Asia Committee would be composed of ministers and counsellors who were already working in East Asia.

The second group would be in charge of the liberated areas and was to be called 'The Cabinet Committee for Liberated Areas'.

Preparations for the administration and reconstruction of the liberated areas were already in an advanced stage and Bose was only waiting to implement them. All the required personnel for the reconstruction in the liberated areas were to be composed of elected ministers and counsellors and also from among those who had already been chosen as ministers and counsellors.

The third group would be in charge of duties in areas occupied by the enemy and was to be called 'The War-time Cabinet Committee'. The Committee was to be formed of ministers and counsellors who were especially capable of managing military affairs, industrial and propaganda problems in the areas under enemy occupation, revolutionary movements, administration etc.



The activities of the three cabinet committees would be controlled from the centre and the unity of the Provisional Government would be maintained by close and intimate liaison among all the departments. These were the salient features of Bose's ideas. Who would laugh them away as simple fantasy ? His plans were earnest, scrupulous and meticulous.

Eventually, the final day arrived. The strength of our Kohima defences against enemy attack from Dimapur was exhausted and the Kohima-Imphal Road was destroyed by enemy action. As expected, the main offensive by the dashing 15th Army also reached a turning point. The commander who was in charge of the offensive, in spite of his illness and being confined to bed, prepared his own plans privately, presented them to his staff and then made a detailed report of the situation to the General headquarters of the South Army which had been shifted to Manila.

On the midnight of July 3, telegraphic orders from the General headquarters arrived asking them to hold out firmly in the Manipur region. After all, this was as expected. But tears poured down the cheeks of the commander. Bose met the ailing commander and talked with him all the same.

On July 5, orders to halt the offensive were announced by the army in Burma. Thus the 15th Army and the INA which had started so brilliantly four months ago began to retreat step by step. A limit to their endurance was also reached. S. C. Bose's plans turned out to be bad and empty dreams.

When the head of the War Council announced a halt to the Imphal offensive, Bose sympathised with him. But he somehow wanted to keep INA troops near the Indian border and announced that his forces would not withdraw further south of Mandalay. Though it was not possible to guess his intentions in issuing such an order, the harsh reality of the situation did not correspond at all with his aspirations.

Even under such conditions he made a radio broadcast addressing Gandhi on July 6. In that, he forcefully explained the reasons for his present course of action. He spoke especially about his trust in the Japanese and traced the course of events since he visited Japan. Further, he spoke of the sincerity of Japanese policy vis-a-vis the Provisional Government of Free India through which he and his comrades were fulfilling a mission. He said he would continue the armed struggle until the last Britisher had been driven out of India.

The sad state of the war situation did not stop at the Imphal front ; the enemy which was striking hard along the India Road increased its air attacks against the Fukon region in the north and Komo in the east. With absolute superiority on land with armoured divisions the enemy gradually increased its pressure on our forces. In other parts of the same battle front,



the life and death struggle of the 33rd division continued—a struggle of one against fifteen.

The total war situation for our armies once again took a turn for the worse also. On July 18, it was announced that the troops defending Saipan had all died in honour. At the same time the Tojo cabinet also resigned. In the European theatre of war, the British and American attack on the French coast was successful. Thus the longstanding demand of the Soviet Union for a second front in the west materialized and the Soviet armies also secured new victories on their front.

Though placed in this sort of a situation there was no change in the fighting spirit nor any defeatism in Bose. When the staff of the Japanese Army in Burma visited him after the resignation of the Tojo cabinet had been announced, his answer to them was quite lucid. He told them that the new cabinet would have to strengthen its fighting will in shaping the course of the war. The enemy was trying to utilize this event in a big way for its own propaganda purposes. He regretted that the services of the great general Tojo should have been dispensed with. Thus though he trusted the sincerity of the Japanese he was somewhat shocked.

When the formation of the new cabinet headed by Koiso was announced on April 22, Bose sent a message immediately to the War Council which announced the formation of the new cabinet. In that message to the new cabinet Bose gave the assurance that he would continue his relations with Japan as before without any change. About the same time the attitude of Prime Minister Ba Maw of Burma also became clear. He feared one aspect of the new Koiso cabinet. In his private talks he said that he had always admired the politics of Tojo which was based on strength.

When the world situation was such, the Provisional Government of India celebrated the first anniversary of Burmese independence on August 2, by arranging a tea party. Since the Japanese were completely absorbed in military affairs, they had no time to think about such matters nor could they afford to indulge in excesses. May be, this showed Bose's alertness in international relations.

On August 30, General Kawanuma who was commanding the withdrawals was recalled. Though he was confined to bed all through the period since the withdrawal began, he did not want to die in that battlefield and the day of parting arrived. The commander who called on Bose to bid goodbye was handed a message in which Bose asked him to convey to the Tokyo Government that whatever the war situation in the west or the east there was no change in his firm resolution. He said further that the contact between the Japanese Army and Indians should be direct and not through the intermediary of Hikari Kikan. He also requested the commander to secure new weapons, spare parts etc. for the INA about which he had carried on negotiations with the officers also. All this showed



Bose's unshakable faith in the Japanese. Though Bose looked rather tired of late, on this day particularly he was as energetic as before. Bose paid a return visit to the commander and politely enquired about the money to be paid to the soldiers of the INA. Then he called the leader of Indians of that area and instructed him to arrange a public meeting to boost the morale of the people. In spite of all this, there was evidence that his expressions of firm resolve were verbal and that he was shaken inside.

Though it was not unusual for Bose to arrange send-off parties for his men, in the case of this departing commander particularly he arranged a special party and invited the Prime Minister of Burma, Mr. Ba Maw also to it. He placed a heavy garland on the shoulders of the ailing commander and did everything to show that he was sincerely moved by his departure. All this impressed all the Japanese present. A few days before the departure of General Kawanuma, Bose along with some distinguished officers of INA again went to meet him and demanded a meeting with him which went to show to what length Bose would go in his negotiations with the Japanese Army.

Finally the commander was given a send-off by the 15th Army. The war situation had taken a completely unfortunate turn and an end to Bose's activities was also approaching. But before writing about it, it is necessary to take a total and critical view of the policy in regard to the Imphal offensive and the relations between the INA and the Japanese Army and explain facts.

One of the main points is that the concept of the Imphal offensive was based totally on military considerations and it was planned mainly to resist the enemy's attempt to recapture Burma. It was never planned as a deliberate policy for an attack on India. It will become clear if we follow the series of reports made elsewhere. At any rate, looking back on the tragic defeat in which the offensive ended, we would be rather hasty in our judgement to conclude that there was something wrong at the very root of the idea. It goes without saying that this offensive which was judged as useless right from the beginning was carried out simply because the Tojo Government was moved by the fervent appeals and demands of Bose. This point has not occurred to any one. When the Provisional Government asked for the attack on India, serious attempts were made to somehow include the Imphal offensive into the plan for Burma and support it as a joint enterprise. Further, the other fact is that after the Imphal offensive was planned, new political meanings came to be added to its purely military character in the course of the war. In the beginning of the Imphal offensive it became clear that the occupation of Imphal was not an affair which would be over in a day or two. But the Provisional Government asked the Japanese Government and the Burma Government not to miss this golden opportunity and carried on a vociferous propaganda



regarding the political implications of this offensive. The result was that military and government leaders were placed in a situation where they could not think of this offensive to the exclusion of the political aspect. Again, in addition to the above facts, because of the reverses in various other fronts, the Japanese were goaded by a hidden desire to secure victory at least in this offensive somehow or other. Then, there was the most conspicuous third problem—the leadership of this offensive during its last stages. Whatever the disadvantages in the war situation, the front line armies were naturally determined to fight to the point of death in carrying out their duties. In this connection the responsibilities of the senior officers to discern the change in the war situation and issue necessary orders was greater. The armies in the forward positions in the Imphal area, knowing fully well that all possible tactics had been exhausted and had met with disastrous failure because of the enemy's superior power, delayed calling off the offensive for quite sometime. If we may say so, since they did not live to see Bose's grand plans fail, they let their own military judgment wither away. Further, though strange things were happening, the leadership of the offensive task force, the higher headquarters or even the Imperial headquarters did not take notice and when they did take notice the offensive was already in its last stages. Thus, military judgment and political reality both became casualties when the road between Kohima and Imphal was lost. In short, we cannot say that the collapse of the Imphal offensive was definitely precipitated by Bose. But it is impossible to deny at the same time that because of the supreme efforts of the Japanese Army to act up to Bose's desires and demands, the offensive met with its tragic end. Unswerving loyalty to international relations by Japan at the cost of supreme sacrifice, we hope and pray, will some day become a bridge between Japan and India and bind us together in establishing peace and bring solace to several thousands of souls whose remains lie scattered in the hills and valleys of Burma. May Bose's spirit also bless this prayer !

### *Bose's third visit to Tokyo*

In September 1944 General Kimura took over the command of the Burma Army afresh. The enemy, without giving us any time to recover our strength and by using its superiority in air power and armoury, pressed forward in strength. Our armies in forward areas were battling with death. The INA led by Bose and the Japanese armies, in the face of all sorts of difficulties involved in such a battle, continuously fell back along the Irrawaddy river. During all this time, Bose's fighting spirit did not shrink or falter. To this person whose entire life had been spent in waging a bitter fight against a powerful enemy, Britain, all tragic situations and reverses were no more than common difficulties. He sent a brief telegram addressed



to the Prime Minister Koiso, at the time of the opening of the national diet and demonstrating his unwavering resolve : "I hereby declare my firm resolve to continue to fight, in collaboration with Japan, our common enemies until they are crushed and the day arrives when India has secured complete independence."

In response to this, Prime Minister Koiso also expressed his firm determination to destroy Imperialistic Britain and America, his appreciation of the firm resolve made by the Provisional Government of Free India and INA and also his willingness to give all help to them. Bose offered about this time a sum of 50 million yen to meet the expenses of manufacturing weapons for the army and navy as a symbol of the unity of the two countries in the joint struggle. In this instance also we believe that the gesture was really a proof of his unshakable resolution. We have mentioned already that he offered aeroplanes in January of the same year prior to the commencement of the Imphal operations. Reflecting on this we realise that he had prior knowledge of Japan's weakness in air power and even now we feel ashamed and sorry.

It was about this time that a navy officer stationed in Burma who had guessed Bose's dissatisfaction and pain at the turn of events suggested a secret line for him. The plan was that he should abandon his present work in the east, then with the Japanese officer as the representative of Japan Bose should proceed to Samarkhand in Central Asia and continue his work in co-operation with the Soviet Union. Since Bose was quite receptive to this suggestion, the naval officer (Nakado) immediately sought permission from the centre. The response of course was negative and the officer and Bose went down in their affections since. But the interest Bose had shown in the Soviets was not something new. Towards the end of July, Yamamoto of Hikari Kikan, before leaving for Tokyo, had asked Bose whether he did not personally think it was better if an attack was made from the west or the north because of the Imphal war situation. Bose was absorbed in thought about the idea for about five minutes. Then he agreed with such a plan and said that if the Government of Japan was agreeable he would like to pursue it. The idea was at once rejected by Tokyo. Nonetheless Bose, for the independence of India, was prepared ultimately to take to any method. The fact that the Japanese should have offered a proposal of this kind, although on a personal basis, probably had great effect. Bose had intended to go to the Soviet Union after the war. And if we looked at his desire at that particular point of time as a partial expression of it in the existing context, we would not be greatly mistaken.

Changing the subject for a while, let us take a look at conditions in India at that time. Developments in that direction caused real agony to Bose. As days passed, a tendency to compromise with the British was becoming stronger among the larger section of the National Congress. A



pre-condition had also been put forward that the Congress party must come to an understanding with the Muslim League. The Congress was called upon to recognize an independent Pakistan. If that should come to pass, India would be partitioned into Hindu and Muslim parts. Bose was firmly convinced that in that case India would be getting into the very trap set by the British and as a result slavery would be perpetuated. When situations developed quite contrary to his faith, it was natural that such forebodings should arise in his mind. On September 13, in a broadcast from Rangoon he warned his countrymen against the deteriorating situation and expressed the hope that they would all work hand in hand till victory was achieved and not submit to the wicked British policy which would lead to the tragic division of India.

Alas, the march of events betrayed his appeals. Even today, after India's independence, his soul would probably not rest ! Only when the two divided countries resolved their differences and united on the road to prosperity as in ancient times, his soul would find peace !

Towards the end of that month, a few days before his visit to Tokyo, information trickled down unofficially from Japan that the Japanese Government was desirous of conferring a title—Order of the Rising Sun of the first merit—on Subhas Bose. His reply to this shocked the Japanese authorities not a little. He said that when the independence of India became a reality, he would be glad to receive it along with his followers. For the time being he would like to set it aside. Would not this incident and the other one in case of Shibuzawa's presents, recorded before, reveal the very essence of his character ?

On November 15 Bose paid a visit to Tokyo by air. His purpose was to have friendly talks with the new cabinet of the Japanese Government and with the military chiefs to bring about closer and more cordial relations between the Provisional Government and Japan. When he touched down at Haneda airport at about 5-30 p.m. along with Chatterjee the Minister without portfolio, Col. Kiani and Deputy Chief of Staff, Habibur Rahman, a number of persons on the staff of the Indian Independence League and students received him. The head of the Hikari Kikan Isoda was also present with his staff to receive him.

The capital of Japan was quite different from the one he visited at the time of Greater East Asia Conference a year ago. The capital now was under enemy's aerial bombing. The island of Leyte in the Philippines had become a battle-ground with the enemy. The scene appeared so vividly before him that the intelligent Bose grasped the situation quickly. As soon as he arrived, he expressed his confidence and faith in a speech at Hibiya Hall. He said that the enemy was now very anxious to finish the war and see that our peoples lost their will to fight. As far as the INA was concerned, they had sworn to fight shoulder to shoulder with the Japanese



Army according to the saying 'to swim or sink together'. But, he asserted that we were not sinking. Righteousness always won according to the law of nature. Let us therefore, he said, fight together and win together. The audience was so spell-bound that they forgot that his speech had taken more than two hours. The voice of Okuma Haku who was presiding rent the air—with the whole audience joining him—with the slogan "Glory to Bose" !

After meeting the heads of the government and military departments, Bose had a friendly talk with Prime Minister Koiso on November 4 for more than 4 hours. In the welcome dinner given the same evening in his honour, the ex-Prime Minister Tojo also appeared in mufti. Bose did not miss this opportunity of greeting everybody courteously over dinner and especially mentioning General Tojo he spoke of the great significance of the previous year's Greater East Asia Conference. This showed his farseeing nature, friendly disposition and also the influence the conference had on him.

On November 6 Bose paid a visit to the Imperial Palace to greet the Emperor at his request. But unfortunately we did not have the chance to ask him about his impressions of this visit. However, on the Emperor's birthday the same year when he was in the midst of the Imphal operations and had moved to Maymyo he sent one of his staff officers to the Commander-in-Chief of the Japanese Army in Burma to convey his congratulations. When we think about it, we realise how well he was informed about Japanese character and the impressions he carried in his mind in this regard.

His stay in the capital this time was for about four weeks. Most of the time however he was engaged in official negotiations with the government and the military and had no spare time whatever. His main business was in achieving his cherished desire of reinforcing the military power of the INA and to reorganize relations with the Japanese Army based on the experience of the Imphal offensive. These negotiations were not based on dissatisfaction or complaints nor to show off one's imaginary powers, but were straightforward, sincere and constructive negotiations. His sincerity simply surprised the Japanese concerned.

On the Japanese side Prime Minister Koiso was still a stranger just introduced to Bose. But compared with the previous Prime Minister Tojo, he gave the impression that it was not possible to fathom his mind. The Chairman of the War Council General Umezu had just assumed office and he carried on his official negotiations mainly through the heads of the military departments.

Except by strengthening the INA and Japanese assistance there was no way out of the difficulties. With that objective in mind Bose was urging strongly that the urgent task that must be undertaken was the strengthening of the INA.



For the strengthening of the forces more weapons and intensive exercises were necessary. The Japanese had not shown adequate appreciation of these factors in the past. Even the small arms available were mostly those captured from the British and, what is more, there were no tanks and artillery. Regarding the strength of the infantry also, Bose had strongly urged on many occasions during his negotiations with the Hikari Kikan that it should be raised to at least 40,000. His own target was far more than the required minimum. He argued further that deployment of the INA to the forward areas was curtailed and that they were used for road building which was not the task of these forces.

The problem of deficiency in weapons was a matter which had not been settled since Bose's arrival. If he had been thinking of organizing the INA on the German model it would be more of a problem. Further, for the defence forces of Burma any idea that the INA should excel in their organizational structure was quite disturbing. The Japanese Army even appeared to have said during their negotiations that they would themselves like to have the small arms possessed by the INA. In trying to convince Bose that this was due to the famished state of the Japanese forces at that time, the Japanese authorities felt extremely miserable.

Bose also said that it was deplorable that he was not allowed to go to the forward positions and he even went to the extent of saying that it was one of the causes of the defeat in the Imphal operations. There were of course other reasons also for the defeat like the clumsy way the forward posts were organized. It was all the more damaging because it was also a propaganda front against the enemy. Moreover, there was carelessness in preparations. But his absence from the front was also one of the causes. He argued further that those who surrendered were able to escape successfully because they were not handled properly. Besides, he made detailed demands as to medical supplies etc.

Regarding the relations of the INA and its leaders with the Japanese, he vehemently demanded that instead of through the Hikari Kikan there should be direct contact with the Japanese Army. Especially the problem of court martial rights dragged on till the end of the negotiations. Though proper replies were given to Bose's various requests and demands, it required tremendous negotiating powers to convince Bose about anything. In his demands regarding the relations of the two armies there were a number of points which were unreasonable and especially under the circumstances they could never be accepted completely. Nevertheless, his attitude till the end was sincere. And although his demands were troublesome the authorities concerned, without feeling uncomfortable, responded sincerely to them. And on November 27, just before his departure they tried their best to arrive at an understanding with him.

, Regarding the character of the Hikari Kikan also there was a problem.



The idea was to split up the Hikari Kikan so that one branch could be put in charge of political and diplomatic affairs. Since the Provisional Government of Free India started with a simple organization with armed struggle as its basic aim, the Japanese by putting Mr. Isoda from the foreign office in the Hikari Kikan as a specialist on foreign affairs was dealing with all external relations through him only. But that officer being a sick person and also because the organization of the Provisional Government had undergone certain changes, both the Government of Japan and the Provisional Government of Free India examined the problem mutually to set up a separate foreign relations department within the Provisional Government. When Bose appeared in the capital this idea took shape and Hachiya was appointed as the legation officer. This happened also just before he left the capital.

Of Bose's achievements during his present visit to Tokyo we cannot overlook the proposition to conclude a treaty regarding loans between India and Japan. In the beginning when the Provisional Government, the Independence League and the INA received funds from Japan for organisational purposes, bonds were prepared as a rule and efforts were made to convert the moral obligation into a regular legal obligation. But Bose was not satisfied with this. He wanted the agreement to be fool-proof and to exclude any situation whereby Japanese assistance might become an impediment on the eve of Indian independence. The Japanese Government was agreeable to this proposal and it was unofficially decided to carry it out.

Bose's purpose in asserting himself strongly on the question of having diplomats and also on the issue of loans is quite clear. It was most disagreeable to him that his Government should be looked upon by outsiders as a puppet government like the Manchurian government. From other points of view also he wanted to have every thing in absolutely correct form. In all this his markedly meticulous nature created as a result of his long fight against the deceitful policy of the British and his uncompromising temperament became evident.

Thus, though the objective conditions then were very bad, Bose's attitude was clear, lucid and positive from the beginning to the end. In all his negotiations with the Japanese, he always displayed a brave face and unbending resolution without trying to meet half way or come to an easy compromise. Once during the course of his last discussion with the military authorities, seventeen B-29 bombers appeared suddenly over Tokyo and the Japanese repeatedly suggested that the discussions should be stopped and that they should withdraw to the basement. But, even at that time he took things in an extremely leisurely manner.

In spite of multiple engagements Bose was not the person who would forget the youth. This time also he met the students in a dormitory and



gave them friendly counsel. He met every one from the warden to the last student at Shioya Hostel. He expressed satisfaction at the progress made by the students. He also went to the Indian Association and urged upon the resident Indians to join the struggle for independence with renewed vigour.

Not only in public affairs but in every other respect Bose manifested a most friendly temperament. His warm affection for those he came to know was touching. For example, he met the ex-Prime Minister Tojo at his private residence and had a friendly talk with him. Even now the family members of the General recall Bose's good qualities with deep emotion. Again, when Mr. Chida a political officer who had worked with him continuously ever since his arrival in East Asia died of illness unexpectedly during his sojourn in Tokyo, Bose expressed his profound grief and condolences.

Rash Behari Bose was still confined to bed as before. Bose's feelings were of a unique kind when he once again met this old comrade whose hands he shook a year before in the same place. On this day also he expressed the hope of meeting Rash Behari again on the soil of free India and his deep and friendly feelings for him. It is sad to recall that Rash Behari Bose died in the month of January of the following year. When Bose who at that time was in Rangoon heard this he sent a telegram expressing his condolences and politely offered money to meet the funeral expenses. During Bose's stay in Tokyo the head of the Nanking Government died in Nagoya. This event pained him deeply. His meeting with the Prime Minister of China last year at the Greater East Asia Conference had soon developed into intimacy. His visit to China at the invitation of the Prime Minister was still fresh in his mind. But what impressed Bose most in the life of the Prime Minister of China was his entire life as a revolutionary statesman. With a special plan for a peaceful union of the divided country, he had escaped from Chungking with determination to do or die by joining hands with Japan and at the same time retaining the independent character of his people and his government. He had struggled hard all his life devoting his entire energy to realize this ideal. His work during that time was directed to breaking down the obstinate resistance of the Chungking Government supported by British and America and it resembled to a great extent the work and ideas of Bose himself. Bose's firm conviction was that the basic factor in any attempt to bring peace to Asia was the unity of China. He had frequently broadcast this message to the Chungking Government in sharp and clear terms. By the loss of such a comrade and a revolutionary leader, Bose felt as if he had lost one of his arms.

In this way the third visit of Bose to Tokyo came to an end. As a result of his negotiations which lasted for more than forty days he was able to establish how far Japan had fallen back in her commitments to assist and also instil into the minds of the Japanese authorities that he was determined



to accomplish his cherished goal. But what were the concrete achievements? Did he not get a negative answer to all his repeated demands made to the government and military authorities in the cause of Indian liberation? Was he able to enlarge his range of vision further and decide upon the right policy for the future?

During his stay in Tokyo he constantly sought an interview with the Russian Ambassador to Japan. With the consent of the military authorities he fixed up a meeting also. But it could not take place and so he sent a letter to the Russian Ambassador. But it was returned. Though the matter ended there, it had a meaning in the context of his past intentions and his actions from then onwards.

On the morning of November 29 he left Tokyo from Haneda Airport and flew west with the object of returning to that distressing battle front of Burma. Did he have a premonition that he would not be able to view again the rare sight of Mount Fuji enveloped in snow. No, he was not the man who would entertain such fears. To pour out his entire strength and energy to the last drop for the sake of his motherland was the only thought that occupied his mind.

### *The End*

The latter part of November, when Subhas Bose returned to Burma, was the peak of the dry season and the enemy planes were having their day in the skies while on land enemy tanks were creating havoc. With such power the enemy held the red road from the east and the west. In the north it had crossed the Chindwin river, held the Konei road and was then advancing on a wide front in the southern direction more or less following the course of the Irrawady river. On top of the bitter fighting that had gone on for more than six months without supplies of food and ammunition, it was announced that priority was to be given to the air and sea battles in the Pacific. Because of the grim battle in the Pacific the Japanese and Indian forces which depended entirely on air support for their supplies, lost their power of endurance and defensive capacity very fast. And on the left bank of Irrawady the armies which were mainly stationed in Mandalay were in a state of continuous retreat. In fact the troops fell back so fast that the enemy usually anticipated our retreat.

The turn of events since Bose's departure for Tokyo was worse than anticipated. Further, British warships were making repeated appearances from their bases in the Bay of Bengal. When the enemy started its offensive on land there was, in fact, some surprise as to why it was so late! In contrast to such overwhelming forces of the enemy, there was only one small unit of Japanese Army commanded by Lt. Sakurai and a division just north-east of Rangoon for the defence of Rangoon.



Bose stationed himself in Rangoon as before exposing himself to enemy bombing day in and day out, leading the INA troops and managing the affairs of the Government. Luckily, the INA which was in the forward area and the 15th Army which was covering the left flank most of the time were in contact with each other and so the withdrawal was orderly. If Bose was allowed to act in his own way, he would have stopped the INA on the left bank of the Irrawady and provide support to the Japanese Army the bulk of which was in Mandalay and was now in retreat. It is for this reason that he pleaded once again that he should go to the forward areas and lead his forces. However, since the troops were surrounded on all sides, he was stopped from going to the front. Further, he had the tremendous task of cheering up the Indians who were overwhelmed by a sense of defeat on all sides. Though he himself was firmly resolved not to retreat the task of keeping these Indians united and protecting them under such conditions was not an easy one. Particularly the Burmese who were surrounded were vulnerable to the change in the war situation.

The month of December also was spent in great confusion and excitement. Since the Red Road was cut, even the last defensive position of Ba Maw's land, in spite of extremely powerful defensive efforts, fell under the attack of the 2nd Division of the 1st Chinese Army organized on American lines. Even then the 33rd Division led by Honda was protecting the northern part of Lashio and was mustering all efforts to provide support to the 15th Army which was completely exhausted and had suffered severely. But the enemy pressed down on the opposite bank of Irrawady river and was waiting like a tiger for an opportunity to cross the river and pounce upon us.

In this desperate state of the war, an incident occurred which made Bose feel extremely lonely. That was the transfer of Yamamoto from the Hikari Kikan. Their relationship was a long one that went back to Berlin days. Especially after his return to East Asia Yamamoto was like a shadow of Bose. The entire organization of the Kikan had meaning for Bose because of Yamamoto only. Theirs was a deeply emotional parting.

On the last day of the year—the last day of 1944—which roughly marked the last phase in Bose's whole life—a detachment of British troops landed in a corner of Akyab.

Akyab ! Chittagong ! and those winding paths along the seabeach—they had all left a deep impression on Bose's mind. The paths he would tread on the road to Delhi to hoist the tricolour ! Though his ambition had been thwarted on all sides by that time, Akyab was the name which he occurred to him often. But eventually the name sounded so bitter.

A new year commenced. It was a fateful year for Japan and for Bose. But he was not the man to waver. Except for marching forward and ever forward in the direction of his cherished goal, there was nothing else in



his mind. In other words, the new year for him was an year of new hopes as before. And he would throw his whole being away for the sake of his country. For him life and death had transcended the beautiful and he had attained supreme understanding.

January 23 was Bose's birthday. His birthday was celebrated with all grandeur in a great public meeting which was attended mainly by Indians. Gold and jewellery offered at this meeting weighed one and a half times his weight.

The war situation became more and more serious as days passed. On January 12 the 25th British Indian Army Division supported by air power and shelling from destroyers landed in Maybom peninsula. The rear of the Japanese Army which went to ambush this was destroyed and on January 26th the 36th Indian Division landed on Ramre island. Thus the enemy's offensive took on a menacing form. On the main front of the 15th Army the scheduled plan of crossing the Irrawady river was carried out. During the first half of January, a decisive battle was launched by our armies against the enemy in the north near Mandalay and about the same time and during the latter part of the month decisive battles were given by our armies near Myangu from the front and from the rear. Again after February 10, between Mandalay and Sugazun where the enemy had tried to cross the river the third attack was made. About this time Kimura, Commander of our forces in Burma went to the forward areas again from the field headquarters at Karo and supervised the Sugazun operations.

The INA, which was in contact with the left wing of the 15th Army, and was also fighting a continuous battle had shown symptoms of losing its determination and some people were alarmed. Bose refused to look on doing nothing about it and so he went to the forward areas himself to inspect the situation. Isoda the head of the Kikan accompanied him. Bose's actions on this occasion as an army leader showed up his real character in a good light. Here we will abridge the opinion of Col. Takahashi who accompanied him on the Hikari Kikan Staff.

"We left Rangoon towards the end of January. After the departure Bose himself took over the command of allotting trucks and duties to various persons who accompanied him. The trucks used to advance during nights avoiding the enemy. The next evening we reached Pynmana. Here Bose invited the leader of the Indian community of that area and enquired in detail from him about the living conditions and other matters and gave counsel. Then he met the leader of the women's army unit of that area and had breakfast with her. In the afternoon, he inspected the 1st division of the INA which was also stationed in that place. The Divisional Commander Kiani showed signs of strain which were beyond description. Bose was looking after all details as he inspected the troops. Thus he continued his work day after day without any rest.



Leaving Pynmana behind, we continued our march. Generally he took rest with the Indian community. Avoiding roads he would not enter any house during the day. He would as a rule fix his hammock to trees and take rest while reading a book. I came to know later that he was reading the history of Irish independence in those days.

We arrived at Matera in the first week of February. After collecting intelligence reports we went to an Indian village about six kilometers in a south-westerly direction the same night and learnt that two INA companies had fallen to the enemy and one battalion had fallen back from the front line and was regrouping itself. Hearing this Bose said that he would go to the forward post and encourage the leader of the battalion. Since there was every danger of enemy tanks making their appearance suddenly in that area, some one suggested that the idea of going to the forward area should be dropped for good. But Bose strongly argued that the pursuing British armies would keep close to the road and so tanks were not expected to appear in the vicinity. The Commander-in-Chief argued back excitedly that it did not mean that the forward posts were in any way less dangerous. The leader of the battalion in the forward post was regrouping his troops. When someone argued that it was necessary to let the battalion leader regroup and watch the situation for a while until he recovered himself, Bose argued that it was exactly in such bad situations that the Supreme Commander should stand by the side of the man and he refused to budge from his position. Finally, it was decided that Kiani and Takahashi should go to the front, find out the situation and their observations should be accepted as authentic. Probably it was at this time that Kiani was reappointed as the Commander of the 1st division and ordered to assume command after a while.....

Enemy tanks were advancing along the roads and were quite vulnerable to any attack since they were not using the high grounds as Major Takahashi would do in his tactical operations. Further, as Bose correctly guessed, the pressing enemy troops advanced deep in a single file rampaging during the day and withdrawing during the night. It is difficult to say whether they knew that the Japanese were running short of anti-tank guns.....

Since the enemy in the northern parts of Meiktila became very active, Bose was advised that he should withdraw. But as usual he was obstinate. In the early morning of February 3 a time bomb exploded and this incident was exploited by circulating a rumour that it was a cannon shot from an enemy tank. Every one complained that it was a dangerous place and thus the party decided to withdraw for a while to an Indian locality about four kilometers south of that place. Since this was a movement during day time there was considerable danger from enemy tanks. With Bose on a horse-drawn cart and the rest of the party on foot, we started to withdraw. When the cart which Bose had occupied was about to enter the village,



enemy planes started to bomb the area and the bombing continued for twenty to thirty minutes.

While retreating he made a suggestion than if we used an armoured battalion or two infantry battalions there would not be any need to withdraw and since he would take up the command himself and stand in the forward posts, we should contact the nearest Japanese field headquarters. Since the war situation at that time did not permit any headquarters to comply with such demands, the local headquarters informed that they were not clear about the legalities of such demands and it was left at that.

It was around February 8 that we arrived at Pynmana. Enemy planes could be seen through the branches of trees or from under the bridges and at the slightest movement of any vehicle, there would be bombing. Between bombing spells and luckily without being hurt, we returned to the place where the 1st division of the INA was stationed.

The morning after our arrival, Bose called on the Commander of the INA in that area and also Lt. Col. Takahashi. Telling them that he was determined to stage a decisive battle he ordered them to reconnoiter the area. After the reports of reconnaissance were analysed he expressed his ideas thus :

‘—————I have been reading the history of the independence of Ireland since we left yesterday. Though all the determined fighters of that freedom struggle were killed, their spirit continued to live seventy or eighty years. Today we see Irish Independence as a fact before our very eyes. I am greatly inspired by that example. If the present situation continues it is difficult for Burma also to foresee its future. Therefore, here at this place I shall fight leading the 1st division and die. Being sure that the spirit of independence will live among Indians I shall wage the last decisive battle here————’

There were many reactions to this. A considerable section of his attendants were embarrassed while there were a number of troops who wanted him to be the Commander. The Japanese Commander and Kiani thought that the place and time for the decisive battle should be quite different. But Bose's resolution was so firm that he would not listen to anything else. In the conference that was held successively for four days, he took an oath from Kiani that he would defend the front allotted to him until death and only then return to Rangoon .....

‘In less than 3 weeks of his inspection tour, all his three subordinate officers had been changed. All the three had broken down due to overwork. Bose would visit Indians or go round inspecting troops throughout the day without any rest and would never sleep for more than three to four hours. In this his assistants were beaten.

‘According to Bose's orders the women's regiment of the INA was asked to return to Rangoon and the problem of vehicles became difficult. On the



way the vehicles which the women troops were using would often develop mechanical trouble. Bose himself would personally go and order that the defective parts be changed. In this Bose showed his deep sympathy for the women and also the consideration that there should not be trouble for them during night movements. But to the Japanese officers this tradition was entirely foreign and unknown and the experience has left a lasting impression on their minds. Even while passing through the high way of Pynmana enemy spies would sneak in every two or three kilometers and there would be fire signals...."

The above paragraphs form the gist of Takahashi's statement. Regarding Bose's ideas on strategy, especially on naval strategy, we give an instance from one of his letters to a naval captain of the 1st southern fleet. Just after Germany had capitulated, about the middle of July, Bose wrote to one of the captains of the southern fleet. In the beginning of that letter he pleaded that a certain subordinate of his in Andaman be returned to Malaya. After writing some strongly worded sentences, he continued "..... well, if the Japanese navy had followed my advice and carried out offensive action much earlier, the war situation in the Pacific would not have been as desperate as it is today. On this point also I cannot but feel sorry for the navy." He somehow gave the impression of taking up a haughty attitude. The officer concerned wrote back promptly: 'After all, the navy had done its best under the circumstances to deal with the situation. Whatever ingenious or divine calculations you might have had, they would not have brought victory in the Indian Ocean operations.'

But it is not clear when and how Bose had expressed his opinion. The alleged letter is also considered by some to be merely an imaginary one regarding one aspect of his character. It also brings out the meanness of the officer who did not know Bose.

The above incidents were only isolated instances. It was quite unreasonable for Bose to have given his judgement on strategy and military affairs and operations of the past since he had no knowledge of such things. The fact that he behaved in a conceited way in matters he knew nothing about may be because of his own self-confidence. Especially since he was the political and military head of the government and further since there were no outstanding persons around him and he shone like a bright morning star amidst them, this tendency might have gone a little too far and become conspicuous.

Let us return to a study of the war situation of that time.

The situation at the fronts where Bose had been personally operating became clear from the head of the Hikari Kikan, Mr. Isoda.

Leaving Rangoon a bit later than Bose, another party led by the second-in-command of the War Council and minister without portfolio Gulzara Singh arrived at Enan Jon accompanied by others after three



days. They continued their march after spending a night at this place. They came up with the Japanese Army which was heading south. And then the party reached the headquarters of the Second Division. There they learnt that two companies led by Shah Nawaz had surrendered. They also learnt about the position controlled by a battalion and the possibilities of defending it for the time being. While doing this five or six officers of the War Council died. The party wanted to move to the forward areas after reorganising itself. But air power was entirely in the hands of the enemy. And at the slightest movement, they would be subjected to aerial bombing. Every ten to thirty minutes there was an air raid signal. In the camp itself the problems of managing its administration were too many and the number of officers very few. The commander of the division was fully determined to recapture the positions which had fallen. He expressed full confidence that the Popa mountain camp could be defended to the last. On the way back, between the Popa mountain and Enan Jon, the War Council was subjected to heavy firing. Especially because the area was known to be a Japanese stronghold and a reserve division was stationed here, the place received the enemy's particular attention.

Bose, after hearing the various reports from the head of the Hikari Kikan felt relieved to a great extent. But in view of the fact that a few positions had fallen to the enemy, he announced about the middle of February that the INA soldiers who withdrew from their positions would be given the death penalty. Since then there was no surrender and no withdrawals from the INA lines. And in fact they fought very bravely. The Japanese authorities offered their salutations to Bose and his leadership later.

During the middle of February, when Bose issued the announcement regarding severe penalty to the troops under his command, the enemy had commenced construction of bridges across the Irrawady, near Miyang and then at Pakok. The Japanese Army staged its decisive fourth attack to foil this attempt by the enemy. The main force of the 15th Army broke through its left flank and planned to throw its strength against the white armies of the enemy which were pressing against us from the Shan plateau and thereby liquidate the enemy's strength south of Mandalay. But even this was not a strong attack and even the attempt to cut the enemy's supply road did not materialise. On February 23 Meiktila came under the occupation of the pursuing enemy troops. Moreover, to meet the urgent needs in the Philippines battle front a considerable strength of the 1st division was pulled out from Burma.

The enemy landing on the beach posed an urgent and serious threat to Rangoon. British aggression, as taught to us in history, was repeated in this area. Japanese forces defending the area rushed to face the enemy on this front. The defence forces of Burma also came to cooperate with our forces



and were admitted to the forward posts. These armies had been trained under the Japanese Army and they showed comparatively the same results as the INA.

On March 15 a colourful parade was held before the Shwedagon Pagoda. Next day Commander Aung San leading the Burmese defence forces himself started to advance to the north in the direction of Pero 1. But God knows why ! These Burmese forces turned their guns against us towards the end of March and attacked the rear positions of the Japanese Army. Alas ! Burmese troops which were trained by our armies revolted against us. Simultaneously the students of the Burmese Military Academy and other young students joined in attacking the Japanese Army and its buildings. But this was suppressed by the Rangoon Defence Corps composed chiefly of resident foreigners. And even the revolt which was staged by the Burmese Army on the road to the north was also suppressed and it did not spread to other areas. But the remnants of the scattered forces started harassing us in guerrilla fashion and became a menace all over the place. The revolt was clearly a preplanned action. Aung San was known to the Japanese as the Defence Minister of Ba Maw Cabinet. Till recently as the head of the heroic Burmese forces (BIA) trained under the Japanese Army he had co-operated in all the operations against the British army right from the beginning and had shared "life and death" with us. It is abundantly clear that he changed sides with the change in the war situation. But the fact that he betrayed the trust we had placed in him completely tarnishes his military record and the honour of the Burmese people deplorably.

When we compare this with the INA led by Bose which fought to the last even after the Imphal operations and regardless of the very adverse turn of events, how can we help loving the INA with all our heart ? Probably there are some inherent traits in a people. There might also be a role of circumstances and prevailing atmosphere. But ultimately the basic factor is in the leadership.

Though plagued by continuous attacks from the rear, our forces continued to fight on the Mandalay front in a determined manner as ever. The 33rd Army which was transferred from the Lashio front to the Meiktila front where the pursuing enemy forces had captured new positions, staged a counterattack but the result was not substantial. And here we planned to stage a decisive defensive battle with the support mainly of the forces from Mandalay. But we lost towards the end of March. The enemy came chasing after the retreating Japanese armies. It came southward like a storm with its armoured division at its head.

For the Japanese armies which had exhausted their food and ammunition the power of the enemy attack was beyond all limits of human endurance. And within about a month, that is on April 21, Pynmana, which



Bose had chosen to be the place for a defensive battle, also fell to the enemy. If the enemy managed to cross this mountain, the areas east of Rangoon could be reached by the highway right up to the plains of Sittoung river. Even Rangoon which Bose considered to be the springboard for the attack on India and where he had located his Provisional Government and marshalled his INA was exposed to enemy attack from the east and west. There was every danger that the communicating roads in the rear would also be cut off.

A day before this i.e. on April 20 a confidential message was brought to Bose seeking his approval of the withdrawal of Commander-in-Chief Kimura from Rangoon. Alas! Such a day arrived at last! Probably Kimura had his own independent views. We have also heard vaguely that a section of the senior officers of Burma field headquarters were opposed to such a withdrawal. Kimura apparently could not help feeling the same way about this painful decision to withdraw as a result of defeat. But there was no way out except to seek reconciliation with the Supreme Command. But, Bose had at this time lost touch with his troops at a number of fronts especially with the women's regiment which had just started withdrawing along the highway. Under such circumstances Bose thought that Kimura's withdrawal was intolerable. And he obstinately rejected the demand for immediate withdrawal. Heated negotiations took place between him and the Japanese military headquarters. Finally Bose agreed that he would let the C-in-C withdraw from Rangoon only after the women's regiment had been fully evacuated. He also left Rangoon in the direction of Moulmein in an automobile on the night of April 23. The emergency meeting which was held just before this decided that certain government personnel and the senior military officer Logonadan should be left in Rangoon and that Bose would fight to the last leading all the remaining troops.

Though there was no particular reason, what could have made Bose maintain his government in this place till it was faced with an extremely dangerous situation? In fact, when conditions began to deteriorate in December of the previous year some people had suggested that the Government should be transferred to Bangkok or further east. Though Bose had consented to this in principle he never showed any inclination to take practical steps for the transfer. It seems that his inner feelings stood in the way. And this attitude became stronger and stronger as the situation went from bad to worse. When he first took his stand as the leader of the INA he had sworn before all his soldiers, ".....I assure you that I shall be with you in darkness and in sunshine, in sorrow and in joy, in suffering and victory...." His behaviour probably stemmed from this oath.

From Rangoon Bose started moving east and further east accompanied by small military detachments in ten trucks. Day in and day out the sound of enemy fire filled the sky. The roads were overflowing with retreating



armies and there was confusion in many places. In crossing the main Sittaung river and its branches the vehicles would frequently develop defects or break down completely. At the same time the remnants of the Burmese defence forces would often appear as guerrillas. Bose's party accompanied by a detachment of the women's regiment was in a very difficult and dangerous position. After leaving Rangoon the party had to stop frequently because of enemy fire. And Bose, being of the opinion that it would be disgraceful to be killed while retreating said that it would be better to pull back to Rangoon instead of retreating and die fighting along with Logonadan's troops. This put every one around him into despair. Whenever a river or a stream had to be crossed, he would see to it that all the women troops crossed first. And he himself would cross last. When there was shortage of vehicles and some one suggested that he should occupy a vehicle he would not agree. He would join some of the troops and walk for days together. When the party approached Moremon a few motor pistons were secured and only then he took a seat in the last vehicle and entered the town. Since his departure from Rangoon Bose exposed himself to danger several times and there were some casualties in his party. One week later when Moremon was reached it was still April. During all this time there was never any fear of death in his mind. He remained with his soldiers who loved and respected him.

After reaching Moremon, Bose wanted to go and greet the C-in-C Kimura who had arrived before him. But, because of security reasons Kimura did not wish to be identified as C-in-C. He distributed *Sake*, diverted the attention of others and paid his respects to Bose. In this way he bade goodbye to Bose, Commander-in-Chief of the INA, with whom he had fought side by side, without saying a word. After seeing to it that all the Indian troops had been sent away by train and trucks Bose left the battlefield of Burma on May 9 in the direction of Bangkok and where he once again met the retreating troops.

The troops that had left Moremon for Thailand besides Bose included a part of Bose's cabinet, legation officer Hachiya and Isoda, the head of Hikari Kikan and a few others. All started the journey on trucks and a small INA detachment and five military policemen were allotted for protection. Since this road also was definitely subject to enemy fire the party moved mainly during nights. In addition to the wretched condition of the road the rainy season had arrived. Thus there were many occasions when the party had to halt. On a number of occasions members of the party had to get down and repair the road. Because of the difficult road the party wanted to use the Burma-Thailand Road Transport. But since wounded soldiers and others were sent by that transport the party could not afford such a luxury. Therefore partly riding on horse-drawn carts and partly walking the party reached a place called Kanchanpuri which is just a few



miles before Bangkok. Only from this place the party could take a truck and enter the capital of Thailand. Thus more than the enemy fire the bad condition of the road slowed down the movement and it took full one week. All the while Bose was going out of his way to meet the soldiers. Occasionally he would go out with a torch and help the soldiers repair the trucks. Sometimes he would come out and offer his own food to the Japanese soldiers who would come wandering in like sleep-walkers. Thus even in the most difficult situations he would show a warmth of feeling unlike officers of the INA in general who would show off much more than they actually were. Bose never showed any personal pride and the INA soldiers always looked up to him as their own father with great respect. Their attitude to persons who were with him was however conspicuously different.

When Bose arrived in Bangkok in this way after facing dangers and hardships, the C-in-C of the Southern Army of Japan, Terauchi, sent him a cordial and sympathetic message. Bose was greatly encouraged by the goodwill of Terauchi. Since the man who carried the message from the C-in-C Terauchi was Nakado, the naval officer who had once suggested to him that he should enter Samarkand, Bose was particularly moved.

Resting for a day in Bangkok after his arrival he started work day and night again to plan the future course of action. He did not entertain any doubts regarding the sincerity of the Japanese assistance. But in any plan of work from the south there would be little hope of success. His pent-up fighting spirit was of course as high as ever before. Besides the soldiers who were returning from the front there were others under his command who would go to the front once again. He was craving to attack with this force on any front and was making herculean efforts to start on a course of decisive action. He was only in a fix as to the direction he should take for the decisive action.

The Southern Army of Japan suggested that the Provisional Government move to Saigon. Bose, without giving his consent immediately, said that he wanted to move his armies into mainland China first and move the Provisional Government to an area where it would be easy to have contacts with a Russian embassy or a legation. The Imperial headquarters was aware of this and despatched a messenger to the Southern Army headquarters ordering that the armies stationed in mainland China and other areas in the south, including the INA, should fight decisive battles under the command of the Southern Army. On June 18 Takakura from the Imperial headquarters met Bose at his residence in Bangkok and their discussions continued late into night till 3 a.m. But Bose's attitude was very firm and he would not give his consent. Finally, having no alternative plan before him, he expressed his concurrence with the Imperial headquarters. Thus when all the troops under his command had shifted finally



to Saigon, he decided to move to that place himself. Meanwhile he strengthened the Indian Independence League in Shanghai and other places in China. And from there he planned to contact Soviet diplomats.

Around August 10, after examining all the reports, the head of the Hikari Kikan drew up a comprehensive picture of the fast changing war situation and conveyed this to Bose. He urged upon Bose who at that time was heading towards Singapore to return to his post. But Bose did not give an immediate reply. Seeing no alternative, the Japanese Government conveyed their intentions to Bhonsle, the head of the War Council requesting that emergency preparations be made. After three agonising days and after three telegrams had been sent, Bose returned to Saigon on August 16. And he sent an appeal to the Japanese Government in these terms : "Along with the trusted persons of my cabinet I would like to go to the Soviet Union. If it is necessary I shall enter the Soviet Union alone. In that case I request the Japanese Government to allow any of my cabinet members to take charge."

The Southern Army asked for an opinion on this proposal of Bose from the Imperial headquarters. In reply the Imperial headquarters said that it would be unfair for Bose to approach the Soviet Union after receiving so much help from Japan. Thereupon General Terauchi told the Indians that it would be unreasonable for them to take a step which was opposed by the Japanese. But he added that he was determined on his own responsibility to do his best to comply with Bose's desires. As a result, an arrangement was made to send Lt.-Col. Shidei from Saigon to the capital of Manchuria by plane, as he had already been transferred to that place and to put Bose also in the same plane. On the way to the capital of Manchuria, the aeroplane was to keep close to Taipeh and fly towards Dairen. Alas, this was a doomed aeroplane. This plane was to fly to the capital of Manchuria and Bose was to bale out close to the Russian armies which were heading south. He could then chalk out his own plan leisurely. The date for working out this arrangement was fixed for August 17.

On the other hand the Hikari Kikan vehemently argued that it was dangerous to send Bose alone and that at least a few of the members of his cabinet should accompany him. But unfortunately there were no surplus seats. Finally it was decided that only one extra could be accommodated. Bose, in the beginning, did not agree to retreat alone leaving all the rest of his cabinet behind. Meanwhile the time for departure approached fast. When it was announced that only fifteen minutes were left for an emergency cabinet meeting he resolved that he himself would leave first and the rest of the cabinet should be helped as early as possible to proceed to other suitable areas.

Thus Bose reached the aerodrome in a hurry. But arranging his luggage took a long time and when the plane was about to take off at last after a



delay of one hour, an Indian gentleman arrived on the scene and said that he had with him the presents offered by all the overseas Indians. He pleaded that Bose should take them along with him. And it would take some time for them to arrive at the airport. After another fifteen minutes they arrived in two heavy suitcases.

At the airport the army staff, the Chief of the Hikari Kikan and all his staff, who had helped him in his bold plans right from the beginning under heavy stress and strain, his cabinet which looked up to him like a father and a number of other Indians, all gathered to see him off. Bose suppressed the emotions surging within him and took off. The aeroplane was a military one of a revised 97 heavy bomber model. It was a new model which had been in use only for a month. The captain and the co-pilot were of exceptional ability.

After refuelling in Taipeh on August 18 at about 2 p.m. with a view to reaching the navigational route to Manchuria the pilot tried to ascend from his taxiing position. Due to some unforeseen cause the left propeller broke loose. Before the aeroplane could come back to the taxiing position it hit the mud dyke and broke up into two. Fire broke out instantly and spread to the gasoline tank. The chief pilot Major Takezawa, Lt-Col. Shidei and another person who were sitting in the front met with instantaneous death. Bose himself received severe wounds. The persons occupying the rear seats were injured by the fire. The only Indian who was accompanying Bose Mr. Habibur Rahman was also among the wounded.

Bose's body was bathed in fire. But he left the plane calmly and stood there like the legendary king in a mass of flames. He was immediately sent to a military hospital in a vehicle. When the army doctor examined him his entire body was covered with burns of the third degree. Blood transfusion, saline injections, heart stimulants and all means were exhausted. About the middle of the night signs of danger to his life appeared. Habibur Rahman who had received injuries in the face was waiting by his side. Although covered all over with bandages Bose was not complaining even a bit about the terrible pain ; he did not even groan. He was occasionally asking for "Mizu" (water in Japanese language) and he only wanted the pillow to be raised a little.

According to Habibur Rahman's statement given to Hikari Kikan, Bose had nothing like a last wish. He only regretted that he should die without seeing the independence of India, which, he could see, was just round the corner. He had no regrets whatever for casting away his entire life for the sake of his country's freedom, but would die with the satisfaction that he had done his very best. Bose was able to say these things in spite of intense pain. According to a health officer who was assigned the duties of looking after Bose, when Bose was asked as to the food he would like to take he wanted curry. When the curry, prepared by the staff of the hospital, was



given to him, he ate it praising the taste and soon after that he lost consciousness.

On August 18, at 11-40 p.m. our Subhas Chandra Bose died after a colourful life while being nursed by Japanese nurses. And before passing away he said, "Please remember me to Commander Terauchi." These were his last words.

When the news of this accident reached the Southern Army Mr. Tada of the War Council was sent there immediately and put in charge of the duties in connection with the accident.

On September 7 Bose's remains arrived in the Army headquarters of Tokyo. The next day the head of the Indian Independence League in Tokyo Mr. Murthy received the remains and on September 14 with the participation of important members of Indian Independence League and Indian students a quiet and secret funeral ceremony was conducted in the Renkoji temple of Nagano. After that there were some difficulties about selecting a place in Tokyo for the safe keeping of the ashes. Subsequently, after the American and British troops had occupied Japan, there was a rumour that Japan had kept Bose concealed somewhere. And secret enquiries were carried on regarding Bose. Anticipating trouble, everyone avoided being held responsible for anything or to give any answer. Meanwhile, fortunately, since the priest of the Renkoji temple in Nagano had openly accepted Bose's death, his ashes were carefully enshrined in the main temple. And the same priest has been offering prayers with all his heart even till now. Mr. Murthy, Indians in Tokyo including the Indian Ambassador have also been offering prayers and burning incense in increasing numbers at this place.

### *The Tradition and Legend of Bose*

Even after the Japanese War was over, as can be expected, the after-effects of Bose's leadership could be seen very well in the attitude of INA officers.

At the time of the conclusion of the war, Bhonsle's headquarters were at Bangkok. At that time an officer of the British Army went to that headquarters to get a typewriter. The INA military authorities quarrelled with him defiantly saying 'although the Japanese Army has been defeated our army has not yet been defeated.' They told him that if he wanted to take it by force, he could do so only after making it clear in writing what articles had been taken. The British officer returned without achieving his objective. Only after three days of continued negotiations between Bhonsle and the British Army was it decided that INA should surrender. During this period it clearly presented itself as a diplomatic and fighting unit with due authority. Its main staff, even after it was banned, did not show even



a trickle of servility and pitied the Japanese army personnel, who let themselves obey the enemy's commands ; regarding food also they demanded improvement in quality. They would say, "We have studied the behaviour of the Britishers for two hundred years. We know very clearly how far it is safe to go and when it would be dangerous. Therefore you will not be in trouble, if you do as we do."

This point was highlighted in the British Military Courts in a case against some of the officers of the INA. Since this court was made use of for propaganda regarding the intentions of the Japanese in their policy towards India, let us try to understand this in detail.

In the month of October 1945, Shah Nawaz, Dhillon and Sahgal, three senior officers of INA were accused in a New Delhi Military Court. The three accused pleaded not guilty through their lawyer Desai in the first public trial. Among those named as witnesses from Japan were Foreign Minister Shigemitsu, General Kawanuma of the Japanese Armies in Burma, the Chief of the Iwaguro Kikan, the Chief of the War Council for Burma, Mr. Katakura, the Liaison Chief Mr. Fujiwara, Isoda, Kagawa and Takaki from the Hikari Kikan ; legation officer Hachiya, and among the Indians Ayer, the Propaganda Minister and Habibur Rahman. Among the Japanese Shigemitsu and Kawanuma were held as suspected war criminals in Japan and some others could not go due to inconvenience. Only five persons, including Sawada and Matsumoto from the liaison office left Tokyo on November 19 and arrived at Delhi on the 22nd. They appeared at the trial on November 10. On January 14, Fujiwara and two others were sent to Singapore. The remaining two returned to Japan.

The accusations made by the prosecutor in this trial naturally were of treasonable character i.e. the I.N.A. composed of surrendered prisoners-of-war, committed treason against their own country under enemy command. And, in the battlefields they committed murder and burglary. On the other hand the defence asserted that the INA opposed the British army for the cause of Indian independence and that it was a glorious fighting unit. Its actions in the battlefield were carried out in the righteous traditions of war and they could never be construed as murder or burglary. There was no Indian who did not seek independence.

It became a problem for the Japanese as to what attitude they should take up in the circumstances. In the eyes of the prosecution, it seemed, the evidence given by the Japanese helped to mitigate the minor offences, but not the treasonable offences. Further, when circumstantial evidence was taken into consideration, the INA had no independent character of its own. Again, though it was claimed that the war operations were a joint venture with the Japanese forces, since the instances where the defenders had acted on their own were few, it was inevitable that the judgement should be based on circumstantial evidence.



After reaching their destination the Japanese came to know that the estimate of their evidence was quite different from what they had thought. As stated above, it was quite contrary to their feelings to argue that their evidence supported the view that INA had no freewill of its own. They always wanted to stress on how matters exactly stood i.e. to stress upon Bose's completely independent character. Accordingly, the defenders acted and worked as an independent army. This point is very clear from the statements made by the defence.

Regarding the independent character of the Provisional Government, the fact that a Minister was nominated from the Japanese side in accordance with Bose's demand became a powerful evidence. Though the person despatched to the Provisional Government did not have the regular credentials of a diplomat the fact that he was dealing with diplomatic affairs, according to customary international law would in itself be enough to prove that diplomatic relations existed. This was the view expressed by an experienced diplomat like Sawada. By this and other evidence, it was possible to destroy the charges of the prosecution that the Provisional Government was only a puppet, a legal myth or a fiction etc.

Further, Katakura provided very clear evidence with documents to prove the independent character of the Provisional Government in the context of the negotiations he carried on with the Provisional Government when he was in the War Council. He told that right from the beginning the independence of India was the objective of Subhas Chandra Bose and that it was never a strategem of the Japanese. The INA was completely under his independent control and that he would never tolerate any interference whatsoever. Bose's authority on the officers of INA was absolute. By making use of his authority and influence Bose took to armed struggle for the liberation of his motherland. And Japan supported it as an item in the context of the liberation of Greater East Asia. The Imphal offensive from the point of view of the Japanese was thus only a war for the defence of Burma. And Bose made use of this opportunity for the Indian Independence Movement. Therefore, though the appearance is similar, the basic reasons of the Imphal offensive for the INA and for Japan are quite different. Further, in the occupied Imphal areas Japan kept her hands off completely and allowed Bose to plan the administration of these areas in his own independent way. Besides, in all practical matters regarding the powers of command, organisation of police and military law etc. the independence of INA was clearly established. Katakura compared all these things with the Manchurian and Burmese armies and showed how the INA differed in its functions by giving concrete instances and thus more than disproved the allegations of the prosecution. As a result of these clarifications regarding the independent character of the policies and actions of Bose, both in its political and military spheres, the judgement was that



that the offences did not amount to treason. The spirit of the defendants brought out the accumulated misery of India's millions for so many years and the determination to die fighting for independence. When we remember that it was Bose who roused this spirit in them, his ideals came to be valued very highly.

There was deep interest regarding this trial all over the world. Though Japan had advanced into Imphal, she had not desired to occupy even an inch of that territory. It was to be completely placed under Bose's administration. Japan had planned only to help Bose in his advance to Delhi and did not have the slightest intention to attack Indian soil. When this fact became clear from the proceedings, newspapers took up the cause and wrote that Japan was only trying to help the cause of Indian independence. The three accused were set free and more than two lakhs of people gathered near the Red Fort at a welcome meeting arranged for them. A huge portrait of Bose was raised and the way in which the day was celebrated was a great experience. Wherever the three went it was like a triumphal return of the INA. The atmosphere had become intoxicating even before their release. Lakhs of people would surround the residence of the Viceroy demanding the release of the three officers. Crowds not less than a million strong would continue to demonstrate everyday. Because of this the British authorities also seemed to have decided that it was not wise to ignore the political consequences.

Thus the charges of treason did not hold ground. But simply individual cases of minor offences were examined. The welcome given to officers of the INA in Indian society generally was very good. Captain Lakshmi of the womens' regiment was named a heroine of the Indian Independence Movement.

Towards the Japanese witnesses also the Indian people expressed friendly feelings. They visited their barracks and showered gifts on them. The guards and Indian soldiers also were always kind to them.

Not only inside India, even in Singapore prisons, the Indian soldiers who were in charge of the Japanese prisoners always showed special favours to them because they knew Bose. And, in general, they were very respectful to Bose. They would never believe that Bose had met with an accidental death. They thought he was still living somewhere in Japan.

Two years later India attained independence. The fact that Indians were able to breathe the air of freedom after casting off the shackles of so many years had in it something that could console Bose, even though that independence was not in the form he desired. At the same time the respect Indians had towards Bose went on increasing. Making an assessment of Bose's work Gandhi said that Bose achieved in a few years what others would have taken several decades to achieve. In Gandhi's opinion the use of arms was regrettable, but Bose's achievements and contributions to



Indian Independence Movement were boundless. Nehru also had been paying tributes to him. He once said that INA under Bose's command belied the past judgement of Britishers that Indians did not have military leaders of high standard. Though INA was poor in equipment compared to the British, it fought gloriously and defeated the white armies.



# SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE AND THE INDIAN COMMUNIST MOVEMENT\*

A STUDY IN CO-OPERATION AND CONFLICT

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Any objective study of the origin, growth and development of anti-imperialist, national liberation movements in the various countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America reveals that communists and leftwing nationalists in all these countries, to a very large extent, shared common political goals, adopted similar methods and consequently had a long history of united struggles. At the same time, we also find, that leftwing nationalists and communists had many contradictory views and their united front activities were sometimes marred by sharp confrontations and explosive clashes. India proved to be no exception to this general pattern and nowhere can this case be better illustrated than in an analytical study of the relations between the Indian Communist Movement and Subhas Chandra Bose.

The political life and activities of Subhas Chandra Bose started after the October Socialist Revolution in Russia. That is also the earliest period to which the origins of the Indian Communist Movement can be traced.

## II. THE FIRST PHASE (1919-1924)

The best patriotic sons of India were behind the bars in October 1917, when the Bolsheviks triumphed in Russia. The British Imperialists did their best to distort the news of the Revolution, yet the impact of the Revolution in India was far-reaching. "The Statesman", the mouthpiece of British capital in India, wrote in alarm :<sup>1</sup> "The acts of the Russian revolutionary leadership in their collective, constitute, what is

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Chairman : Dr. K. N. Pandey



certainly the most rapid and bids fair to be the most comprehensive movement of subversion to which any historical state has been subject".<sup>1</sup> The official report of the British Government was terse, but equally emphatic : "The Bolshevik Revolution in Russia has given impetus to Indian political consciousness".<sup>2</sup> A leading nationalist daily of Calcutta commented : "The downfall of Tsardom has ushered in the age of destruction of alien bureaucracy in India too".<sup>3</sup> The radical nationalists of Madras wrote : "Our hour is approaching, India too shall be free. But the sons of India must stand up for right and justice as the Russians did"<sup>4</sup>. Tilak in Bombay wrote in the "Kesari" in similar vein and the pioneering Indian Communist leader S. A. Dange declared much later that he was originally Tilak's *chela* (disciple) but in 1919, he was rapidly becoming Lenin's *chela*.<sup>5</sup> The head of the British Intelligence in India, neatly summed up the situation thus : "In U.P. and Bengal, the Kisan Sabha and the Ryot Sabha are frankly pro-Bolshevik. The Bolshevik method on the question of distribution of land has greatly attracted the Indian masses".<sup>6</sup> The leaders of the newly formed International Communist Movement also actively tried to forge links with the Indian National Movement. Late in 1918, the leaders of the Soviet Communist Party declared : "The East is becoming red. The proof of this lies in the dozens of revolts and protests of which we get reports from Afghanistan, Egypt and India. The East is already stretching out its arms towards Soviet Russia ....."<sup>7</sup>

Between 1918 and 1920, a number of Indian nationalists and revolutionaries, at great personal risk to themselves, tried to cross into the USSR, in order to enlist the support of Bolshevik Russia and the world communist movement. Indian revolutionaries abroad, who had pinned their faith on achieving victory for the Indian Revolution through an alliance with Imperial Germany during the First World War, were now rapidly changing their ideas and stretching out their hands towards Soviet Russia. Among them were such well-known names as Virendranath Chattopadhyay, Maulana Barkatullah,



Dr. B. N. Dutta, Sardar Duleep Singh Gill, Abani Mukherji and of course M. N. Roy.

In 1920, from the rostrum of the Second Congress of the Communist International, Lenin called for a vast united front of all anti-imperialist forces—nationalist and communist, reformist as well as revolutionary. Lenin put it quite sharply : “The Communist International should support bourgeois-democratic national movements in colonial and backward countries”.<sup>8</sup> M. N. Roy, then an immature leftist, challenged Lenin’s views and scoffed at the Indian Nationalists in his speech. Patiently, but firmly Lenin demolished Roy’s erroneous views and declared : “In Russia we supported the liberation movement of the liberals when it acted against Tsarism. The Indian communists must support the bourgeois democratic movement, without merging with it”.<sup>9</sup>

Nationalist opinion in India was not slow to respond. The British Intelligence sources reported : “In October 1920, the well-known Indian revolutionary, V. Chattopadhyay, who was then in Stockholm put forward a proposal for the organisation of all shades of Indian revolutionaries whether Nationalist or Communist ..”.<sup>10</sup> “Atmashakti” the leftwing nationalist weekly of Bengal and supporter of Deshbandhu C. R. Das wrote : “The factors that led to the rise of Bolshevism in Russia, are also present in India .....they cannot be suppressed any longer”.<sup>11</sup> C. R. Das himself, in his speech as President of the Gaya Session of the Indian National Congress declared : “Swaraj must be for the 98 per cent toiling masses and not for the 2 per cent upper classes. Swaraj must not mean mere replacement of the white by the brown bureaucracy.....”.<sup>12</sup> The Presidium of the Fourth Congress of the Communist International, then in session, sent a message of solidarity to the Gaya Congress, pledging full support to the cause of Indian Independence.<sup>13</sup> No less a person than the then Viceroy of India sent a wire to the Secretary of State for India in the following terms : “A section of the extremists, C. R. Das included and some newspapers, have been attracted by M. N. Roy’s doctrine of rousing the masses. The methods and ideas of the



Bolsheviks, also naturally appeal to men like the Bengal ex-detenus".<sup>14</sup>

The Communist International followed up its policy declaration, by more concrete efforts to bridge the gulf between Left Nationalists and Communists and invited two prominent young left nationalists to attend the next congress of the Communist International as delegates—these two names being Chiraranjan Das (son of C. R. Das) and Subhas Chandra Bose, along with a full-fledged communist like Sripad Amrit Dange.<sup>15</sup> In a confidential note to the Centre, P. C. Bamford Special Superintendent of Police, Intelligence Branch, Bengal, wrote on the 23rd August 1923 :

"In August 1922, a letter was seen by us in which Roy jointly addressed Subhas Bose and Chiraranjan, the son of C. R. Das, inviting them to attend the Congress of the Communist International as delegates from India C. R. Das and his lieutenant Subhas Bose also seem to have been impressed".<sup>16</sup>

Neither Dange nor Subhas Bose was able to attend any congress of the Communist International—the alien rulers barred their path. But the twin forces came closer to each other in the common struggle against imperialism. Addressing the delegates session at the Gaya Congress (1922) openly as a communist, the veteran Labour leader from Madras, Singaravelu Chettiar declared : "Comrades, first and foremost we have one thing to do, that is we have to attain Swaraj".<sup>17</sup> Dange had already written a few months earlier in his own paper "Socialist" : "We suggest to the radical minded men of the Congress a programme of a party suited to our present condition. The party may be called the Indian Socialist Labour Party (ISLP) of the Indian National Congress ...."<sup>18</sup>

Subhas Chandra Bose also became extremely friendly towards the Communists and lent every possible help, including much needed safe shelters, to the first two underground Communists from abroad—Abani Mukherji and Nalini Gupta<sup>19</sup> As has already been pointed out, such friendly attitude towards the communists was not peculiar to Bose alone, but to most left nationalists. Dange has movingly referred to the magnificent



act of solidarity towards them by Sachin Sanyal of Kakori Conspiracy Case fame, when Dange and others were standing trial in the famous Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy Case.<sup>20</sup>

### III. THE SECOND PHASE (1925-1929)

Subhas Chandra Bose was arrested by the British and kept in jail for some years (1924-27). After his release, he attended the annual session of the Indian National Congress at Madras in 1927, where together with Jawaharlal Nehru, he played an important role. The main debate in that congress was about the goal of the national movement—whether it was to be complete Independence or whether it should continue to be Dominion Status. From records, it becomes clear that it was the small but clear-headed band of Indian Communist delegates to the Madras session who fought most determinedly for acceptance by the session of the goal of Complete Independence. It should be noted that the small underground Communist Party of India, issued an open appeal to the delegates of the annual session of the Indian National Congress at Ahmedabad, as far back as 1921, demanding the acceptance of complete Independence as the goal of the national movement. The official historian of the Congress records that the proposal was moved at Ahmedabad by the leftwing Khilafatist leader Maulana Hasarat Mohani but received only 9 votes.<sup>21</sup> The same resolution was again jointly moved at Gaya by Singaravelu in 1922, with no better result. But at Madras, the situation was different. Gandhi was absent and the Communist delegates secured the support of both Bose and Nehru. K. N. Joglekar, a pioneering Indian Communist from Bombay and a leader of G.I.P. Railway-men's Union moved the resolution in the delegates session: "This Congress declares the goal of the Indian people to be complete national Independence".<sup>22</sup> Subhas Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru strongly supported the motion and it was passed. The Indian Communists and the left nationalists took their unity in action forward and formed in 1928 at Delhi a new organisation called: "The Independence for India League" whose declared aim was "the



achievement of complete Independence for India and reconstruction of Indian society on a basis of social and economic equality".<sup>23\*</sup> Both Nehru and Subhas Bose joined this organisation and it was planned to affiliate it with the League against Imperialism, with headquarters in Berlin and with the great Indian revolutionary, Virendranath Chattopadhyay as its main organiser.<sup>24</sup>

In 1928, at the 'Calcutta Session of the Indian National Congress, Subhas Chandra Bose once again spear-headed the resolution on complete Independence at the delegates' session, supported strongly by Jawaharlal Nehru. It was moved in the form of an amendment to the main resolution moved by Gandhi : "This Congress adheres to the decision of the Madras Congress declaring complete Independence to be the goal of the Indian People and is of the opinion that there can be no true freedom till the British connection is severed".<sup>25</sup> Gandhi opposed this amendment and the Calcutta Congress defeated the Bose-Nehru amendment by a narrow majority.<sup>26</sup>

The Communists who had solidly supported the Bose-Nehru amendment were naturally disappointed but not down-cast. The CPI had no legal existence then, but the open forum of the Indian Communists, the Workers' and Peasants' Party of India organised a massive demonstration of 50,000 workers who marched to the venue of the Congress Session, entered the Park, held a meeting and adopted a resolution declaring

\* Netaji himself had something different to say about the formation of the Independence of India League : "At the time of the All Parties Conference in Lucknow in August, a new development took place. While the settlement of the communal question.....was welcome to the younger nationalists, the recommendation regarding a dominion form of government, coming as it did after the Madras Congress resolution on independence, was quite unacceptable to them . . . A private meeting of members of the Congress Left Wing was therefore held at Lucknow to decide our course of action and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and I suggested that instead of dividing the House and thereby wrecking the All-Parties Conference, we should content ourselves by voicing our protest at the Conference and then proceed to organise an Independence League in order to carry on active propaganda in the country in favour of independence.. After the Conference, we started organising branches of the Independence League all over the country and in November, at a meeting held at Delhi, the Independence League was formally inaugurated". (The Indian Struggle 1920-1942, pp, 152-3). Ed.



complete Independence to be the immediate goal of the Indian National Movement.<sup>27</sup> This created a tremendous favourable impression in the minds of all left-nationalists, Bose and Nehru included.\*

The Imperialists too singled out the Indian Communists as the most dangerous enemy—the potential builders of a massive anti-imperialist united front of all patriotic and progressive forces in India. Early in 1929, Lord Irwin, Viceroy of India, declared : “The disquieting spread of communism has for sometime been causing my government anxiety”.<sup>28</sup> From another pole, M. N. Roy agreed with this comment : “Imperialism has not failed to notice the radicalisation of the nationalist movement and to focus its attention on the force causing this radicalisation...”<sup>29</sup> The young CPI held the first meeting of its underground Central Committee at Bombay from 17th to 19th March and adopted a political resolution calling for the forging of an anti-imperialist united front. Imperialists did not wait any more and struck at once. On the 20th March 1929, the British net closed and 31 leading trade unionists, mostly communists but also some left nationalists were arrested all over India and the notorious Meerut Conspiracy Case was started. Subhas Chandra Bose was also to be arrested soon and jailed for long years (Actually due to illness, he was allowed to go out of India, but not allowed to move freely in this country). Just before his arrest Bose was elected President of the All India Trade Union Congress mainly due to communist support (1931) and the new General Secretary of the AITUC was the Communist Labour leader of Bombay, S. V. Deshpande. In fact, the Communists and left nationalists had made a common front in this T. U. Congress against the moderates headed by men like N. M. Joshi.

\* Netaji had this to say regarding the workers' demonstration : “During the sittings of the Congress a procession of 10,000 workers visited the Congress pandal to demonstrate their solidarity with the struggle for national freedom and to appeal to the Congress to take up the cause of the starving workers”. (The Indian Struggle 1920-1942), Ed.

Also see discussion



#### IV. THE THIRD PHASE (1930-39)

This growing united front received a sudden jolt mainly due to the sharp ultra-left turn of the Indian Communist Movement, thanks in a large measure, to the wrong tactical line of the Comintern. Late in 1928, the Sixth Congress of the Communist International was held at Moscow, where the new line on the colonial question was clearly put forward—a sharp, sectarian departure from Lenin's original thesis of 1920. Moving the thesis on the colonial question, Kusinen stated :

“The main obstacle to the victorious organised struggle against British Imperialism and its feudal allies is the influence of opportunist Bourgeois Nationalism”.<sup>30</sup> Hence came the new Comintern directive, a rejection of the Leninist position, later on dogmatically accepted by most of the immature Indian comrades : No truck with the bourgeois-led Civil Disobedience Movement and expose the left-nationalists as pseudo-revolutionaries. Gandhi, Nehru and Bose were all characterised as “representatives of the capitalist class working against the fundamental interests of the toiling masses of our country”.<sup>31</sup> The united front was at an end and the estrangement of the Indian Communists from the mainstream of the Indian National Movement was almost complete. The slender thread of unity that still existed in the Trade Union front, was also rudely snapped, when the Communists under the leadership of S. V. Deshpande and B. T. Ranadive walked out of the AITUC in 1931 and formed the Red Trade Union Congress.<sup>32</sup>

Not all Indian Communists, however, blindly followed the wrong advice of the Comintern. Foremost among those who differed and thought independently were S. A. Dange and the U. P. youth leader P. C. Joshi. Both were in Meerut Jail then and they advised the other comrades to adopt a political line of participating in the Civil Disobedience Movement and to act as the most uncompromising fighters for Indian Independence. A co-prisoner Philip Spratt who broke with communism later on, testifies to these facts.<sup>33</sup> Outside jail also, some communists notably those who had recently crossed over to communism from the ranks of the national revolutionaries,



actively participated in the freedom's battle, then being waged under Congress leadership. Among them were stalwarts from Bengal like Bankim Mukherji, Abdur Rezzak Khan and the present leader of the Communist Party of Bangladesh, Moni Singh.<sup>34</sup> All these communists led great working class strike battles against Imperialism and were awarded savage sentences. They met Subhas Chandra Bose in Alipore Jail and part of the old fraternal relationship was restored.<sup>35</sup> The national movement, too, in the main stood by the prosecuted communists at Meerut.

In February 1933, Subhas Chandra Bose left for Europe. On 10th June 1933, Subhas Chandra Bose in his printed speech to the Third Indian Political Conference at London, tried to explain the debacle of the Gandhi-Irwin truce and advanced the proposal of forming a new party in India under the name of the Socialist Party.\* Thus it should be clear that the left nationalist trend in India, as represented by Subhas Bose, was also being pushed towards a sectarian position. But the International Communist Movement went even further left and wrote : "This so-called new policy of Bose does not help the struggle for Independence. On the contrary, it only leads to a further enslavement of the toiling masses. .... the difference between Gandhi and Bose is only that the latter wishes to make a compromise on better terms ."<sup>36\*\*</sup>

In 1935, was published the first edition of his book "The Indian Struggle". It is well-known that Bose had partially praised Fascism in that book and this came in for legitimate criticism from communists. Jawaharlal Nehru on the other hand, had taken a consistently antifascist position. Nehru wrote:

\* Netaji wanted the party to be called the Samyavadi Sangh. As to the role of the party, he said : "The new party will have to play the role of the fighters and leaders in the 'national' campaign against Great Britain and also the role of the architects of new India. ...In the first phase, the fight will be a 'national' fight against Great Britain—though the leadership will be in the hands of the 'party of the people' representing Indian labour and inter-class fight under the leadership of the same party, and during this phase of the campaign—all privileges, distinctions and vested interests will have to be abolished, so that a reign of perfect equality (social, economic and political) may be established in our country." (Fundamental Questions of Indian Revolution. p. 21). Ed.

\*\* See Appendix for full text. Ed.



"There is no middle road between Fascism and Communism. One has to choose between the two and I choose the Communist ideal."<sup>37</sup> Bose sharply attacked Nehru in his book on this issue and wrote : "The view expressed (by Nehru) is fundamentally wrong... the next phase in world history will produce a synthesis between Communism and Fascism. And will it be a surprise if that synthesis is produced in India ?"<sup>38</sup> However when Bose visited England, he met there the British Communist leaders R. P. Dutt and Ben Bradley and publicly re-stated his position, frankly admitting that his earlier assessment of Fascism was totally wrong.<sup>39</sup>\* By 1936, the CPI had also corrected its erroneous policies and adopted a policy for forging a broad "Anti-Imperialist Peoples' Front, with Communists, Congress Socialists, Trade Unionists and Left Congressmen as the hard core".<sup>40</sup> Relations with Subhas Chandra Bose, who had just returned to India, improved considerably and new Bengal Provincial Congress Committee that Subhas Bose headed, had at least two prominent Communists as the new office-bearers, Bankim Mukherji as a Vice-President and Panchu Gopal Bhaduri as an Assistant Secretary. The CPI also took the lead in forming the Left Consolidation Committee inside the Indian National Congress, which was a four-pronged alliance between the CPI, the CSP, the Royists and the Subhasites.\*\* Left unity

\* What Netaji actually said was this :

"My political ideas have developed further since I wrote my book three years ago.

"What I really meant was that we in India wanted our national freedom, and having won it, we wanted to move in the direction of Socialism. This is what I meant when I referred to 'A synthesis between Communism and Fascism'. Perhaps the expression I used was not a happy one. But I should like to point out that when I was writing the book, Fascism had not started on its imperialist expedition, and it appeared to me merely as an aggressive form of nationalism.

"I should point out also that Communism as it appeared to be demonstrated by many of those who were supposed to stand for it in India seemed to me anti-national, and this impression was further strengthened in view of the hostile attitude which several among them exhibited towards the Indian National Congress ...." (The Indian Struggle 1920-42, pp. 393-4). Ed.

\*\* The Left Consolidation Committee was actually formed in Bombay in June, 1939, immediately following the formation of the Forward Bloc in May, 1939. The existing Leftist parties and the Forward Bloc agreed among themselves to form the Committee which was to function as the organ of the entire Left. (The Indian Struggle 1920-42, pp. 403-4). Ed.



was also instrumental in re-electing Subhas Bose as President of the Indian National Congress for its Tripuri Session in 1939, defeating the rightwing candidate Sitaramayya who fought with the open support of Gandhi. P.C. Joshi, leader of the CPI, gave an open call for support to Subhas Bose and every issue of the CPI organ "National Front" carried the banner headline: "Vote for Subhas". After Bose was re-elected, P.C. Joshi in a signed editorial in the "National Front", captioned "Rank and File Victory" wrote ; "Subhas Bose is the Rashtrapati again...National Front, through an Editorial, written as early as 16th October, was the first paper that proposed that Subhas Bose must be re-elected to lead the Nation in the critical times that lie ahead..."<sup>41</sup>

This was in fact the high-water mark of the kamraderie between the CPI and Subhas Chandra Bose.

The Congress Right-wing led by Patel, gave constant provocations to Subhas Chandra Bose and the Indian Left and he fell into the trap. The result was Bose's resignation from Congress presidentship, his suspension from the Congress and his final break, leading to the formation of the All Indian Forward Bloc. The C.P.I. stood by Bose solidly in all his battles against the Congress Rightwing but opposed his founding of a new platform, objectively counter-posed to the Indian National Congress. The choice before the Indian Left became sharp and inescapable—leftist hegemony even at the cost of a split in the Congress or Congress unity, which meant then the broadest anti-imperialist platform ? Bose opted for leftist hegemony objectively even at the cost of a Congress split. The CPI on the other hand chose the path of preservation of the United National Front. The CPI very sharply criticised the machinations of the Congress Right, but at the same time refused to take any steps that might split the broad anti-imperialist united front and wrote that "the interests of the anti-imperialist movement demanded not the exclusive leadership of one wing ; but a united leadership."<sup>42</sup> And again, pleading for an all embracing united national front, "The leftists have exposed the shortcomings of Gandhism sufficiently



in the past. With the new strength at their command, the time and opportunity have come for them to weld even Gandhism with the new nationalism".<sup>43</sup> The International Communist Movement also tacitly supported this line, as opposed to the tactics of forming a purely left-orientated front and declared : "The question of paramount importance in India, in our view, is the unity of all national forces under the leadership of the Indian National Congress".<sup>44</sup>

As could be easily understood, the relations between Bose and CPI became somewhat strained, yet they remained reasonably friendly towards each other. In Bengal in particular, the Forward Bloc and the CPI entered into a limited alliance to conduct united militant mass struggles against Imperialism, for release of political prisoners and for democratic liberties. Well-known communist intellectuals like Gopal Halder, Benoy Ghosh and S. Upadhyay worked in the Editorial Board of the "Forward Bloc" the organ of Subhas Bose's party and enjoyed his political confidence till the end. At least two articles by Subhas Bose also appeared in this period in the "National Front", the organ of the then illegal CPI. In one such article, in the form of a message of greetings, Subhas Chandra wrote :

"My heartiest congratulations to the "National Front" during the period of its existence and am glad to be able to say that it has consistently stood for the national line of struggle and...for the unification and consolidation of leftist forces  
....."<sup>45</sup>

This became possible because with the outbreak of war, the two leftist forces in India, which were working on the line of organisation of mass general strike and upsurge in India, to culminate in an armed uprising, were the Forward Bloc and the illegal CPI. This common programme drew them together, despite the sharp post-Tripuri tactical differences. Bose and the Forward Bloc expressed their determination to utilise the war crisis to promote a mass struggle for national independence, with or without the Indian National Congress. The CPI too, in its Politbureau meeting of October 1939 declared that "the task of the Indian people was the revolutionary



utilisation of the war crisis for the achievement of National Freedom.....the capture of power is an immediately realisable goal.”<sup>46</sup>

In one respect however, the CPI assessment differed from that of Forward Bloc. The CPI was not prepared, like Bose, to move with or without the Congress, but explained the new tactics as one “as would move the Congress itself towards struggle.”<sup>47</sup> British Imperialism recognised the CPI tactical line as most dangerous to its safety and lashed out. From March 1940, massive arrests of known communists took place on an all India scale. Those who were not arrested, went underground. The Forward Bloc too shared its quota of repression and this imperialist persecution drew CPI and FB objectively together, as comrades in distress, though sharp differences often created bad blood also.

#### V. THE FOURTH PHASE—AN INTERLUDE (THE ESCAPE OF S. C. BOSE)

Towards the middle of 1940, Subhas Chandra Bose decided upon the course of leaving India and carrying on armed liberation struggle from abroad. His aim was to go to the USSR and make Central Asia his operational headquarters. Accordingly he contacted outstanding Indian Communists of Punjab and North Western Frontier Province through his own trusted partymen. His chief contact man was Mian Akbar Shah, then a member of the Working Committee of the All India Forward Bloc, who in his early youth had gone to the USSR through Afghanistan, became a communist and was arrested on his way back to India at Chitral and the famous Peshawar Bolshevik Conspiracy Case of 1921-22 was launched against him and his comrades. Bose also contacted, the veteran Communist leader of Punjab, Achhar Singh Cheena, who agreed to arrange for the piloting of Bose to USSR through N.W.F.P. and Afghanistan. In July 1940, Cheena and another veteran communist Ram Kishen went to arrange the details and tried to cross the Afghan-Soviet borders, across the River Oxus. Cheena was able to cross into USSR, but Ram Kishen slipped,



fell into the fast-flowing Oxus and was drowned. Subhas Chandra Bose was informed that arrangements were ready to take him out, but due to internal political reasons, Bose had to delay his trip till 1941. As is well-known to everyone now, once again Mian Akbar Shah and Achhar Singh Cheena became the key contact men in the Punjab and NWFP and another outstanding Pathan communist revolutionary was chosen as the man who would accompany Bose in his daring bid to escape to liberty—this man was Bhagat Ram Talwar, a veteran communist from 1936 right upto the present day.<sup>48</sup>

Even so inveterate an opponent of the CPI, H. V. Kamath had to acknowledge publicly in 1951, that the Indian Communists rendered valuable service to Netaji Bose in his efforts to escape from India in 1941. During Kamath's trip to Europe he met a leading Italian diplomat, who was in Afghanistan in 1941 (Quaroni, Italian Ambassador to Bonn in 1950-51) and he stated : "Bose was being helped by Indian Communists and he was accompanied in Afghanistan by a man who called himself Rahmat Khan (i.e. Bhagat Ram Talwar)".<sup>49</sup>

The subsequent story of Bose's repeated attempts to go to the USSR, his failure to do so and his ultimate trip to Berlin, are too well-known events of history and need no elaboration from me.

## VI. THE EXPLOSIVE WAR YEARS

Subhas Chandra Bose ultimately chose the Axis Powers as his allies during the Second World War, working from the age-old premise "Enemy's enemy is my friend". The Indian Communist Movement, however, pin-pointed the Fascist Axis Powers as the most dangerous enemies of human freedom, including India's freedom and basically chose the anti-fascist side. The differences between Bose and the CPI at this time were too profound and basic to be patched up and they stood poised in two opposite camps. The writer of this essay would, nonetheless, like to draw attention to certain salient features of this period.

First, it has to be clearly admitted by Marxist historians,



that the assessment of the then Indian Communist Movement about Subhas Chandra Bose being a kind of quisling of the Axis Powers, was utterly wrong and has not been borne out by one iota of historical evidence in later years. Rather, all evidence known to this day, clearly indicate that Subhas Chandra Bose, in very difficult and unfavourable conditions, maintained his independent stand and refused to become a cat's paw in the hands of either Hitler or Tojo. The clearest evidence of this is his refusal to allow the Indian Legion to be used against the USSR<sup>50</sup> and the refusal to allow the INA to be used against Aung San and the AFPLF in Burma, after their anti-Japanese resistance struggle started on the 27th March 1945.<sup>51</sup>

Second, it has to be equally clearly admitted by all admirers of Netaji that despite his noble patriotic motives of the highest order, his historical perspective during the Second World War was basically wrong because he failed to assess the Axis Powers as the potential aspirants for world domination as the most monstrous Imperialist dictatorship known to have appeared to that day in the arena of human history. Hitler's totally contemptuous attitude towards Netaji's Indian Legion is well known. I shall give but one example. In the one recorded reference to the Indian Legion, Hitler said : "The Indian Legion is a joke. There are Indians who can't kill a louse. They won't kill an Englishman either. I consider it nonsense to put them opposite the English . . . If we used Indians to turn prayer mills, they would be the most indefatigable soldiers in the world."<sup>52</sup> Moreover, recent research work in the GDR has revealed how distrustful were the Nazis of Subhas Chandra Bose. A report issued by the German Central Archives at Potsdam says, inter alia, "From the very beginning German Fascism was distrustful of Mr. Bose and his fellow combatants. Each step of Mr. S. C. Bose was being watched, each letter was subject to censorship. Transmissions to India, of course, were not excluded from it."<sup>53</sup> The same report adds : "Since Bose when leaving Germany had left explicit orders with the soldiers to fight only against the British, but never



against the Soviet Union, the Indian patriots refused to go to the Eastern Front. As a result, 10 Indians were at once executed by order of a Court Martial ..”<sup>54</sup> The role of the Japanese Imperialists was qualitatively no better and Subhas Chandra, despite his valiant efforts, was unable to save the general massacre of civilians in Andaman Islands in early 1945, carried out by Japanese Fascists.

It is also to be noted that Aung San in Burma, Soekarno and Sharifuddin in Indonesia, in fact all anti-imperialist leaders of S. E. Asia, with the solitary exception of Ho Chi Minh and his Viet Minh, followed Subhas Chandra Bose’s strategy and initially lined up with the Axis Powers, on the basis of the same dictum : “Enemy’s enemy is my friend”. But two years of Japanese occupation of S. E. Asia, and the consequent rapacious activities of the Japanese imperialists shattered all illusions about the “Co-prosperity Sphere”. And all the erstwhile allies of Japan, being staunch patriots also, turned into inveterate opponents of Japanese Imperialism and organised armed liberation wars and guerrilla movements against the Japanese, seeking in every case political and military agreement with indigenous Communist Parties who were in the field against the Axis Powers much earlier. This was the case in Burma where the AFPFL was a united front organisation of Aung San and the Burmese Communist Party. Similar also was the case in Malaya, Philippines and Indonesia. Only in Indo-China, the entire national movement led by Ho Chi Minh, never compromised with the Japanese and carried on a continuous liberation war, first against the French and then against the Japanese, winning liberation on the 2nd September, 1945, through a national anti-Japanese uprising. All these constitute stubborn historical evidence and no amount of sentimental admiration for Netaji can wash them away. Perhaps Subhas Chandra Bose himself was changing his own views about the Axis Powers, as this speech indicates :

“Friends ! I shall once again refer to the war in Europe. There was a time when German armies had advanced inside Russia right upto Stalingrad. I wonder how many people



there were who in those days could imagine that the tide would turn, that one day the Soviet army would be in Berlin. Germany's defeat is one of the surprises of this war.

"It is clear by now that the war aims of the Soviet Union are quite different from those of the Anglo-Americans though they had a common enemy in Germany".<sup>5 5</sup>

## VII. CONCLUSION

Thus our brief historical survey reveals certain clear features. Both Subhas Chandra Bose and the CPI represented militant, anti-imperialist trends in Indian National Movement and were opposed to politics of petitions, prayers and constitutional quibblings. Hence time and again both Bose and the Communists came together on a common, militant, anti-imperialist platform. Co-operation started from the beginning (1922) and reached its zenith in 1939 during the period of the Left Consolidation Committee. There were strains and stresses also during this entire period, partly due to the sectarian, dogmatic lapses of the Communist Movement and partly due to the subtle anti-communism inherent among most left-nationalists. Conflict between Subhas Chandra Bose and Communists became fundamental and unbridgeable during World War II, when one chose the Axis Powers, while the other opted for the anti-fascist camp. However, after the war and still later, followers of Bose and the Indian Communists have come together time and again in common militant battles for the final act in India's struggle for liberation and after liberation for common socialist aims. This essay, is the author's humble attempt at an objective, frank and critical re-evaluation of the entire period of relationship—whether of co-operation or of conflict—between Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and the Indian Communist Movement.



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### Discussion

*Mr. Sibnath Banerjee :* The facts regarding the AITUC were as follows. There were three groups. First, the N. M. Joshi group and our present Rashtrapati was in that group ; second, the nationalist group to which we belonged and then there was the communist group. When we were in jail following Meerut, the communists combined with the nationalists and ousted the N. M. Joshi group. The ouster was by a majority which was doubted by N. M. Joshi and others as a fake. All sorts of resolutions were also passed and Joshi left in disgust. I am not sure of the respective strength of the groups in terms of actual figures. I am therefore inclined to accept the speaker's figures. But the claim that Jawaharlal Nehru was elected by only a majority of eleven votes sounds strange to me. I think there is some mistake somewhere. It is a fact that in the second phase of the trade union movement, the communists very vigorously supported Netaji for the Presidentship. But that was only for a time and for the purpose of ousting the moderates. Within a year the communists turned the tables and started attacking Netaji and the third AITUC was formed

In one respect, Professor Chattopadhyaya has been completely misled. It is about the workers' meeting organised in Calcutta on the 28th December 1928. Without modesty I may say that I was the prime mover in the matter. The Indian National Congress held its Calcutta session in the Park Circus maidan at the end of 1928. The open session was on the 30th December. A mass of workers estimated to be 50,000 to 1,00,000 strong, occupied the pandal in the morning in spite of stiff resistance of Congress volunteers and passed two resolutions—one on Complete Independence as against Dominion Status and the other consisted of a Charter of Demands for workers. This was just before the National Congress Session started.

The demonstration was a great success and had great repercussions in the country, specially amongst Congressmen, who were sharply divided on the main demand viz. Dominion Status vs. Complete Independence. The former group was supported by Mahatma Gandhi and elder Congressmen like Motilal Nehru, Sardar Patel, Maulana Azad, Babu Rajendra Prasad and others, while the latter demanding complete independence was led by Subhas Bose, Jawaharlal Nehru, Hazrat Mohani and others. Although the latter were defeated in the open session, the demand for complete independence received powerful support from leftist and workers' organisations.

After the successful demonstration, many people particularly the Communists wanted to take the credit for themselves and claimed that they had organised it. But that is farthest from the truth.

The Communists, in the name of the Workers' and Peasants' Party, had organised another anti-Congress demonstration on their own, denouncing the Congress as pro-Imperialist and paraded the Park Circus area on the



previous day. It was led by all known Communists viz., Muzaffar Ahmed, Halim, Sohan Singh Josh and others. There were hardly 1000 persons in this demonstration. They held a meeting near the Congress pandal and dispersed.

The massive workers' march to the Congress was organised and led by late J. C. Mitra (Jatadhari Baba) and his colleagues of Lilooah Railwaymen's Union. It has been differently estimated to be 50,000 to 1,00,000 strong or more, the biggest in those days. Some prominent members of Workers' and Peasants' Party like Bankim Mukherjee, Radharaman Mitra, Gopen Chakrabarty and Dharani Goswami participated in the demonstration and meeting. Every paisa spent on the demonstration was provided by the Lilooah Union which also supplied all the 10,000 volunteers and over 30,000 processionists, consisting of 15,000 railwaymen and 15,000 engineering workers of Burn & Co., Jcssop & Co., Guest Keen Williams, Martin State Railway etc. of Howrah and Kidderpore. The rest were jute workers, seamen, sweepers and workers of other categories of Calcutta and suburbs viz. Howrah, Bauria, Budge Budge, etc.

After the disastrous defeat in the middle of 1928 of the prolonged strikes of railway workers at Lilooah and Howrah and jute workers of Bauria, Chengail etc. the brilliant idea of the demonstration was conceived by late K. C. Mitra to revive the spirit of dejected and defeated workers. The idea was taken up by his colleagues and leaders of those strikes. But as K. C. Mitra had practically left Lilooah after the collapse of the strike there, the burden fell on late Santi Ram Mondal, Dinesh Roy, Gopen Chakrabarty, Bimal Ganguly and myself who was the second-in-command in Lilooah after K. C. Mitra. The entire money for the organisation of the demonstration was contributed by late Bimal Ganguly by selling his paternal property for Rs. 250/- only. People today would hardly believe that such a big demonstration was organised with so little expenditure. All that we could do was to print 25,000 small handbills in Hindi, Bengali, Urdu, Oriya and Telegu, outlining the demands and asking the workers to assemble at the foot of the monument at 9 a.m. on the 30th December 1928. The appeal was in the name of K. C. Mitra and his colleagues like ourselves and no communist was mentioned there. In the appeal it was stated that to see the Congress and the top national leaders one had to buy tickets worth Rs. 25/- or at least Rs. 5/-, but by joining our procession one would see everything free of charge. It would also be the best opportunity to enlist the support of Mahatma Gandhi and other national leaders in the just cause of workers against the British Imperialists who broke all strikes by lathi charges and firing.

The workers were very sore after their defeat in the prolonged strikes at Lilooah and Bauria. The idea of placing their grievances against the British imperialists before national leaders, who were themselves fighting



the same imperialists caught their imagination and they enthusiastically joined the procession and meeting in their thousands. It was a Sunday and the main procession started from Lilooah at 8 a.m. It was 10,000 strong. As it marched towards Calcutta with loud slogans of 'Inquilab Zindabad' etc. thousands joined on the way and by the time it reached the then floating Howrah Bridge, the number was 20,000 and by the time the procession reached the monument at 9 a.m. it was 30,000 strong. It was joined by small processions from different parts of Calcutta, Kidderpore, Cossipore, Bauria, Chengail, Budge Budge and Titagarh. The handbills had been distributed in all working class areas up and down the Ganges over a stretch of 25 miles. By 10 a.m. the maidan around the monument was a sea of humanity of about 1,00,000, the biggest gathering in those days. A few thousand women workers, mostly municipal and jute mill employees were also there.

Jawaharlal had attended the A. I. T. U. C. session at Jharia and we had elected him President, defeating his Communist rival. We had declared that Jawaharlal would preside over the workers' meeting, against his father Motilal, who was to preside over the Congress session. This was regularly published in the Congress organ 'Forward' for days together.

J. M. Sengupta was the Chairman of the Reception Committee and Subhas Babu was the G. O. C. of volunteers in full military uniform. Unfortunately for us Subhas Babu was informed that we were going to spoil the Congress and loot the expensive exhibition containing merchandise worth a crore. On the night of 27th December Subhas Babu telephoned to us at Lilooah and requested us very forcefully to abandon the procession and the meeting. K. C. Mitra passed on the phone to me and I explained to Subhas Babu that it was not possible at all to do so at that late hour. Workers had been preparing for it for weeks. What face would we have, if we suddenly dropped it? When he told us of his information and fear, we assured him that nothing of the kind would be allowed. He said that he had confidence in us but mischievous anti-Congress and anti-national people would try to utilise the opportunity, create disturbances and damage the fair name of Bengal. But we could not agree and he was quite displeased. When our procession reached the gate of the Congress pandal, we were stopped by 2000 Congress volunteers with 6 feet lathis in their hands. They were the picked revolutionaries of Bengal, well versed in the use of the lathi. There was pushing backwards and forwards and there was a standstill. Meanwhile workers surrounded the whole Park Circus maidan of about 50 acres including the Congress pandal, exhibition and all. It was past twelve and there was a stalemate. Five of us were allowed to go in to negotiate. Subhas Babu was adamant and was of the opinion that once the workers were allowed to enter, they would not leave after an hour as applied for and holding the Congress session would be impossible.



Jawaharlal tried to come on horseback to persuade the workers to leave, but he fell from the horse and he gave up the attempt. Gandhiji was at the Jhanda Chowk. We were told that we could all go there and have his darshan. We were not agreeable. The matter was referred to Gandhiji. He was a shrewd and practical man. He gave his opinion in our favour. He argued that if the workers refused to leave the pandal, the Congress session could not be held, as using force to remove the workers was out of the question. But if the stalemate was not resolved and the workers besieged the Congress compound, no delegates could come in through the barricade of workers. Hence it would be wise to allow the workers to come and hold their meeting and have trust in their good sense to disperse in time.

So, the permission was given and we occupied the pandal with loud shouts of victory. Jawaharlal Nehru, President of A.I.T.U.C. presided, as announced already.

There were only two resolutions—on Complete Independence and the Charter of Demands for workers, moved by late K. C. Mitra, who was the main speaker, followed by Kalidas Bhattacharjee, Bankim Mukherjee, myself and others. The resolution was passed with loud shouts of “Inquilab Zindabad” “Swadhin Bharat ki Jai”. The meeting concluded with a speech by Jawaharlal Nehru. After that Motilal Nehru, President of the Congress, also addressed the gathering. After about one hour and fifteen minutes the meeting ended and the workers left in an orderly manner. A few miscreants continued to sit in the pandal. This showed that the information gathered by Mr. Subhas Bose was not unfounded. But we announced over the mike that the pandal must be cleared immediately and our volunteers did so in no time.

The Statesman and particularly the Englishman published this news in a different manner. The resolution on Complete Independence pleased Shri Subhas Bose immensely. Since then he became my close friend and remained so throughout his life, which was a great gain to the labour movement.

*Mr. Nirmal Bose :* I should like the speaker Professor Chattopadhyaya to state if there has been an official re-evaluation of Netaji and his role in the national struggle by the Communist Party of India.

*Mr. Amiya Nath Bose :* I desire to ask two questions of the Communist historian Professor Chattopadhyaya. It is possible he will not be able to answer the questions today. But I hope he will deal with them in the book that he is writing. Before I ask the questions, I shall have to give you the background as briefly as possible.

After the war started in September 1939, Netaji's view was that an opportunity of this nature which comes perhaps once in a century should not be lost. He was convinced that the Right Wing leadership of the Congress would do nothing to launch the national movement for independence



and that every attempt should be made to work for an armed revolution inside India. His immediate objective was to contact the Soviet Government and he sought the assistance of the Communist Party of India to get into touch with the Soviet Government. He sought their assistance to convey to the Soviet Government his wishes that the Soviet forces should move towards the North West Frontier and assist the armed revolution inside India. At that time the Russo-German Non-Aggression Pact was in force. With the knowledge and assistance of Communist Party of India I carried the message Netaji wrote to the Soviet Government. That was the phase of cooperation between the Communist Party of India and Netaji. But I must tell you that the Communist Party of India made it quite clear that they did not agree with Netaji but they only agreed to assist him to transmit the message to the Soviet Government.

I carried two messages to London—one written and signed by Subhas Chandra Bose to the Soviet Government which I handed over to the Soviet agent in England. I carried another message—a written message which I insisted I should read. The message was from the Communist Party of India asking for directions from C.P.G.B. I handed it over to Mr. R. Palme Dutt.

It is said that the change of line of the Communist Party of India, from the line of anti-imperialist war to people's war, was due to certain directives from the Comintern or to a decision taken by the Communists here. But I have examined all the necessary files about the matter available in the National Archives about the Communist attitude towards the war and particularly their attitude towards Netaji and my father (Sarat Chandra Bose). And from these files it appears that it is not correct to say that this *volte face*—if I may use that expression—had anything to do—so far as the documents are concerned—with any directive, at least any written directive, from the Comintern. These files also disclose that Achhar Singh Cheena evidently got a secret message, evidently the message was not in writing, from the Comintern asking the Indian people and Indian Communists to support the British war effort. This was communicated to Reginald Maxwell. The matter was gone into and considered. But the real change of front was due to a meeting held in London. I will just read one or two sentences from this note from London :

“Before publication the thesis was tried out. The thesis was written by Rajani Palme Dutt. The thesis was published under the heading ‘A policy for the Indian people’ in ‘World News and Views’ on October 4, 1941, This was tried out at a meeting held in London on September 24, 1941.”

We had some idea of that meeting, though we did not know who were present there. I will give you the names. To quote once again from the file :

“This was convened by V.K. Krishna Menon, not under India League



auspices but at the request of R.P. Dutt who with his brother Clemens and Ben Bradley were present and was the principal speaker. Indians of varying shades of opinion attended, among them, Mulk Raj Anand, J. P. Appaswamy, Dr. K. S. Shevlanker, Mr. P. N. Haksar and some representatives of the Indian student fraternity. It is on the basis of this meeting and this thesis that directions came from C.P.G.B. to the Indian Communist party to change its political line."

My question is, in 1941 or even in 1939, was the Communist Party of India expecting directions from the C.P.G.B. for its policy towards the war ?

Now about my second question, I have no documentary evidence on this but I will give you the names. Mr. Bhagat Ram Talwar confirms that this is correct. My erstwhile fellow-member of Parliament Mr. Ramamurthy,—now a member of the Marxist Communist Party—told me something on which I hope the Communist historian will give an answer. Mr. Ramamurthy told me that after the war when the first delegation of the Indian Communist party went to Moscow and was received by Stalin, Stalin's first question was :

"What the hell made you declare this anti-imperialist war as peoples' war in India ? How did you expect that your support to the British war effort would have assisted the Soviet Union or the Soviet armed forces ?" This is a most outstanding statement, coming as it did from Stalin, if it did.

Mr. Ramamurthy also told me that one of the persons who were present at that meeting with Stalin, was Mr. Dange, the leader of the CPI. He should be in a position to answer this question.

*Mr. Gautam Chattopadhyaya :* As for Mr. Amiya Nath Bose carrying letters from the CPI to the Soviet Embassy, etc. these are not really questions with which I am concerned here. I shall refer only to two questions. First, the most important question and for which I do not need any fresh investigations because I am fully in charge of all the facts, viz. how did the line of the CPI change during the Second World War. When the Soviet-German War was declared on the 22nd June 1941, the substantial portion of the Central Committee of the illegal CPI was in jail. Another section was underground. And, it took the latter some time to meet. In the first meeting there was a sharp clash of opinion as to what stance the CPI should take regarding the war after the German attack on the Soviet Union. The question was whether the imperialist character of the war had now changed to an anti-fascist people's war, or, whether it was an imperialist war on the western front and an anti-fascist people's war on the eastern front of Germany. You will remember that Japan had not yet entered the war. This controversy went on till a document arrived from Deoli Jail signed, among others, by the late Ajoy Kumar Ghosh who was then in that jail. In the history of the Indian Communist Movement, this is known as



the jail document. The jail document of Ajoy Kumar Ghosh castigated the Indian Communists for the delay in changing their line and said that the socialist fatherland of the world was under fire, that there could not be any hesitation in the Communist ranks—the war was now a people's war. Then it went on to elaborate the line that should be taken. Another note was handed over to Nikhil Chakraborty (now the names can be mentioned) by his teacher Professor Susobhan Sarkar—who was not and is not a member of the Communist Party but the doyen of Marxist historians. Professor Susobhan Sarkar suggested in his note that perhaps the character of the war had undergone a basic change throughout the world and that perhaps it would be proper for the Indian Communists to re-investigate their tactical line to that of an anti-fascist people's war.

It was on the basis of these two documents that P C. Joshi and that section of the leadership which was out of jail and underground, sat down and prepared their preliminary document. It is no doubt true that at this stage a note from Harry Pollitt, the CPGB document to which Mr. Bose referred, arrived. There is no mystery about the letter from Harry Pollitt. The letter also suggested that the character of the war was now an anti-fascist people's war.

So, the political line changed due to indigenous thinking. But there is no doubt that writings in the Pravda or criticism of the British Communist Party or the German Communist Party or the French Communist Party for that matter, contributed to the change. It is well-known that when a Communist Party sits down to discuss a basically changed situation, it not only takes into account its own resources of thinking but it also takes into account, and it is not generally ashamed of that, the thinking of other Communist parties. That is the methodology of the Communist movement. Whether one agrees with it or not, that is the fact as the historian sees it.

The meeting in London might have taken place. A letter from R.P. Dutt might have come. I have not seen R.P. Dutt's letter. The note was from Harry Pollitt who was then the General Secretary of the British party.

And about the question regarding Achhar Singh Cheena bringing a secret message, I cannot answer the question for the simple reason that I am hearing about it for the first time. When I asked Mr. Bhagat Ram Talwar three days ago why did he think the Soviets did not agree to meet Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose while he was in Kabul, if there was any political difference, etc, he was unable to give me any satisfactory answer except to say that they tried and they failed. I shall certainly put this question to Achhar Singh Cheena and the leaders of both the Communist parties.

Now about Mr. Ramamurthy stating something about the meeting with Stalin in Moscow. Mr. Ramamurthy was not a member of that



delegation. I have not had the occasion to talk to Mr. Dange about this. But I heard a verbatim version, as far as possible, from another delegate, who is also an important leader of the Indian Communist Movement and who went to Moscow. They certainly met Stalin and they certainly had many discussions. But I did not hear about a single reference to the Communist characterisation of the Second World War at all. The main question that was discussed there, according to the report that I received was the characterisation of India after independence by the Indian Communist Movement—the question of transfer of power and the character of the Indian Republic. But these are not relevant to the subject of my paper.

Now, I shall deal with certain points regarding the Trade Union Congress. One anti-Communist has given us the figure that in the All India Trade Union Congress of 1931 where Subhas Chandra Bose was elected the President there were 351 delegates of whom 147 were definitely Communist representing the Girm Kamgar Union and certain other unions. You will agree with me that if out of 351, 147 vote for a person, I can certainly say that they were substantially responsible for his election, whatever their strength might have been in the total national movement.

Secondly, in the previous All India Trade Union Congress they put up a candidate against Jawaharlal Nehru and Jawaharlal Nehru could win by only a margin of 11 votes. So, you will see that the communists were not an insignificant force in the All India Trade Union Congress in 1930-31.

As for the Left Consolidation Committee I also go by recorded evidence. The Left Consolidation Committee was constituted of 12 members always, 3 from each group—3 from the supporters of Subhas Chandra Bose, 3 from the League of Radical Congressmen as the Royists were known then, 3 from the Congress Socialist Party and 3 from the National Front, the illegal C.P.I. And the unwritten constitution, the convention of L.C.C. was that all decisions should be either unanimous or not at all. I have nowhere tried to suggest that the C.P.I. was singly instrumental in getting Subhas Chandra Bose with a massive following elected to the Congress President. All that I have wanted to say is this that the C.P.I. like all the other 3 segments was an equally, active effective instrument in building the L.C.C. and getting Subhas Chandra Bose elected the Congress President.

*Mr. Amiya Nath Bose :* The Left Consolidation Committee was formed after the Tripuri Congress.

*Mr. Gautam Chattopadhyaya :* My records are different and I stand by them. I would not like to carry on a controversy over this now.\*

\* The speaker was obviously in error.

The Left Consolidation Committee was formed following the formation of the Forward Bloc, thus some months after the Tripuri Congress. The Committee therefore could not have played any role in the election of the Congress President for the Tripuri session. Ed.



I shall now deal with the question of any re-evaluation of Subhas Chandra Bose by the Communist Party of India. I do not know of any official Congress of the Communist Party, undivided or divided, at least those records which have been published, and which we have been able to see where there is any re-evaluation of the C.P.I. attitude during the Second World War—whether it be the attitude towards Subhas Chandra Bose or whether it be the attitude towards the Quit India Resolution and the struggle. There have been many opinions expressed, oral as well as written. I can give only one official example—a recorded speech of late Ajoy Kumar Ghosh, the then General Secretary of the Communist Party of India before a party Congress—but this was not adopted by the party Congress as a resolution, but a speech which was neither accepted nor rejected. He of course gave the speech as the General Secretary in which he said: “whereas our characterisation of the second world war as an antifascist one was basically correct, our tactical line in relation to the Quit India struggle and our assessment of Subhas Chandra Bose were both basically at fault.”

*Mr. Milan Hauner* : May I make just a small factual contribution to the discussion without getting involved in Indian domestic politics ?

This concerns the rather overnight change of the categorisation of the imperialist war into people’s war. The Soviet Union—let us be clear about it—was primarily concerned to beat off the Nazi aggression. And, therefore, I think, the ideological classification of the war was of secondary importance to Stalin.\* And this was reflected in the conversation, the record of which I found in the second volume of the official publication “The Transfer of Power”, released in London last year, based on official documents of the India Office. This is a conversation which L. S. Amery the then Secretary of State for India had with Maisky, the then Soviet Ambassador in London. Maisky, presumably acting on advice from Moscow expressed his worry about the internal disturbances in India. But when Amery told him that the imprisoned Communists would be released and the illegal Indian Communist Party would be legalised, Maisky expressed his great satisfaction. And so the report ends.

The second point I want to make is that it is known that Moscow had been broadcasting in several Indian languages throughout the war. It was one of their eleven foreign stations. There must be some record in India of the broadcasts. There must have been some one in India who recorded them. And perhaps from the record of programmes broadcast from Moscow to India, research students could elaborate the basic trends of Moscow propaganda towards India.

*Mr. Pradip Bose* : I think any objective evaluation of the Communist

\* The War waged by the USSR against Nazi Germany has been consistently described by the USSR over the past three decades as the *Great Patriotic War*. Ed.



movement in India will lead us to the conclusion that every twist and turn of the Indian Communist movement has been dictated from Moscow in the name of the Communist International and when the Communist International was dissolved in 1943, directly from Moscow to the Indian party. There was at one stage a transmission belt from Moscow to India via London. But that, I think, is a very unimportant detail. Now, Professor Chattopadhyay has referred to the meeting of the Communist International in 1928 when the so-called left sectarian policy was adopted. And in that resolution Nehru, Bose and Nariman were branded as counter-revolutionaries. So, we find that from that period to the mid-thirties the so-called left sectarian policy continued. Individual communists in India might have had their reservations, might have had their own distinctive opinion, but so far as the party was concerned, they had to follow this policy. As a part of that, there was the breaking up of the Trade Union Congress in 1931 and the formation of the Red Congress.

Then, when the Communist movement in Nazi Germany was smashed by Hitler, the Comintern and the Russian leaders realised the danger. They started calling the social democrats, whom they had been calling social fascists, very good fellows and progressives and the popular front was started in Europe. Similarly, in India we find that the conception of National Front was adopted. And the specific instruction was that the Communists should effectively infiltrate the Congress movement and specially the Congress Socialist Party. Therefore, during this period, of National Front or Popular Front of the thirties, we find that Netaji and the Communist Party coming closer to one another. But here the point is, even during this period of collaboration, what was the position in 1939? In 1939, specially after the Non-aggression Pact between Russia and Germany and following the beginning of the war Molotov was sending warm congratulatory telegrams to Ribbentrop on the wonderful success of German armed forces in subjugating Poland, France and for the matter, the whole of Europe. When we read the Russian documents of the time, we find that it is said that the war was started by the Anglo-American imperialists and not by their then friend Adolf Hitler. This was the position in regard to Russo-German relations of the time. And Netaji, being interested in the removal of the British imperialists from India, thought that the Soviet Union could play a very significant role. And he tried and tried very desperately to obtain their help in 1941 when he was in Kabul. But I quite understand the stand of the Soviet Union in refusing any help to him. And, their policy was proved to be quite correct because the German invasion was coming and the help of the Anglo-Americans was crucial for the existence of the Soviet Union.

The question of the change-over to a people's war was obviously related to the Soviet Union being in danger. It is a matter of detail how it was



brought about. It took the Communist party six months to take a decision on the matter—in December 1941. But they had to take it.

Finally, as regards the question whether the CPI has made a re-evaluation regarding Netaji. The CPI will never formally make an objective re-evaluation of Netaji till the Soviet Union does so. And the absence of Soviet delegates from this seminar shows that they have not yet made up their minds.

*Mr. Ranjan Borra :* Ideologically speaking, I think there could be no question of any compromise between the Communists and Netaji because of Netaji's categorical rejection of doctrinaire Marxism over and over again since the early thirties. And he had not changed his views. Therefore whatever the alliance or collaboration, mentioned by Professor Chattopadhyay, between them must have been tactical, just as his seeking Axis help was also tactical from his point of view. Netaji's ideology—the doctrine of synthesis—could never be accepted by the Communists and they could never form a joint ideological front with Netaji and his political party if he were to return to India after World War II. Therefore the question of this so-called collaboration with the Communists is a purely superficial one. And I want this to go on record that the question of conflict was destined to become sharper and sharper as time passed. And if Netaji had come back, there would definitely have been confrontation

*Mr. Samar Guha :* I shall first deal with the speaker's reference to Netaji's alleged failure to prevent the massacre of Andamanese after Andaman came under the administration of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind. I have personally been to Andaman, met not dozens but hundreds of people and cross-examined them. Contrary to what the speaker has stated, hundreds of people were freed even before Netaji arrived there. Perhaps the speaker did not know of the British agents, a ring of British agents, who were operating from a number of islands and in the jungles. Many of them were caught red-handed with transmitters and other equipment. Those people were undoubtedly killed. Some of the other people I met had been condemned to death but they were saved as a result of Netaji's intervention. Some of these did of course tell me that on occasions they could not meet Netaji personally or the person in charge.\* Therefore it is absolutely incorrect to say that Netaji failed to stop the massacre of the Andamanese.

In this connection I feel tempted to add something more. I had the occasion to meet Dr. Jose Laurel, who was known as the father of Philippines, in Manila. He narrated to me a story which he thought I should know. At a particular time, Japanese soldiers were killing Philipinos like flies. Dr. Laurel said that he did not know what to do. He almost felt like resigning. Then it occurred to him that his friend Chandra Bose could

\* Netaji visited Port Blair for two days only, 29-31 December 1943. Ed.



perhaps help him. He sought Netaji's help and it was with his help and intervention that many people in the Philippines were saved.

As regards Hitler's reported remark about the India Legion, is it not a fact that the remark was made, if it was made at all, in 1945 when Netaji issued special instructions to the India Legion not to fight on the Eastern front but only against the British forces and at a time when the Hitler regime was on the verge of collapse? Therefore, even if Hitler made certain observations about the India Legion at that time, historically they are valueless.

Now I would put certain basic questions to the speaker. He has been quoting certain observations of Lenin. Is it not a fact that prior to 1930, before the well-known directive of the Comintern arrived, the role and the strength of the Communist party of India were so insignificant, that the party could not materially affect the policy of the Indian national movement? Secondly, I want to quote the whole of the relevant portion of the platform of action of the Communist party of 1930 as published in the International Press Correspondence. It says: "The most harmful and dangerous obstacle to the victory of Indian Revolution is the agitation carried on by the left elements of the National Congress led by Jawaharlal Nehru, Bose, Ginwalla and others. Ruthless war on left national reformists is an essential condition if they are to isolate the latter from workers and the mass of the peasants and mobilise the latter under the banner of the Communist Party." Is it not a fact that before Dimitrov's popular front theory came in 1935, the Communists were stoutly opposed to all kinds of national movement? It is of course a fact that after the failure of the civil disobedience movement of 1930, the Communist party as also the Congress Socialist party gained strength and started growing.

Next, Netaji made a distinction, I think the speaker will agree with me here, between Communist ideology and the anti-imperialist role of the Communist party. As we know, the Communists did not use the expression 'leftist' but 'anti-imperialist' in accordance with the Leninist concept.

The speaker said that Netaji made a mistake by setting up an alternative platform outside the Congress. This is not correct because in the beginning it was not so. Netaji formed the Forward Bloc inside the Congress. Members of the Forward Bloc had first to be members of the Congress. It was a struggle between the Left Wing and the Right Wing inside the Congress. Netaji was of the opinion that there should be a national struggle on the basis of our national demand while the Communists, who were still working with Netaji, stood for local struggles, not national struggle. Thus the main point of issue between Netaji and the Communists was between local struggles and national struggle. To come back to the main point, at the time there was no question of an alternative platform. Netaji sought to carry the compulsion of national struggle inside the Congress. The speaker



will remember that Netaji once wrote to Gandhiji that he would dissolve the Forward Bloc if Gandhiji agreed to start a national struggle

*Mr. Sisir K. Bose* : The truth of the matter is that Gandhiji split the Congress by declining to work with the Left-wing. Netaji did not split the Congress.

*Mr. Samar Guha* : You are right. Netaji did not split the Congress.

Thus we see that the whole assessment of the Communist Party at that time was absolutely wrong. Netaji was not seeking then an alternative platform outside the Congress but a conversion of the rightists of the Congress to the leftist demand for the immediate launching of a national liberation war. Here I shall quote Netaji's own observations on the role of the Communist party (*The Indian Struggle 1920-42*, p 337) :

"There was an opportunity for the Communist Party—then functioning under the name of the 'National Front'—to come to the forefront. But the Communist Party, besides being numerically small, lacked a proper national perspective and could not develop as the organ of national struggle. Not having its roots in the soil, this party very often erred in estimating a particular situation or crisis and consequently adopted a wrong policy."

Now, I would place certain fundamental issues before the speaker. It is a historical fact that Indian independence was achieved as a final consequence of four major national struggles. First, the struggle of 1920-21 known as the Non-Cooperation movement ; second, the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-32 and, as an adjunct to it, the No-tax campaign of 1930 ; third, the Quit India Movement of 1942 ; and lastly, the Azad Hind Revolution. I want to know the role of the Communist Party in these four major wars of Indian independence. In 1921 the Communist party was too insignificant to play any role whatsoever. In 1930-32, the party opposed, bitterly opposed, the movement. In 1942 they not only opposed but played the role of imperialist agents. The documents are there. They got the freedom-fighters arrested, dubbed the Forward Blocists and Congress Socialists as goondas following upon the sudden conversion of the anti-imperialist war into a people's war. Fatherland got precedence over the motherland ! As to the Azad Hind struggle, they said that if Subhas Bose came back, he would be received with bullets. Worst possible attacks were made on him. He was called a running dog of imperialism, quisling, etc. etc. and the worst types of posters, pamphlets and cartoons were published. They failed to grasp Netaji's fundamental objective and the revolutionary means he sought to employ to achieve it. Netaji was fully aware that it was not possible to conquer Delhi with 60,000 INA men. His revolutionary strategy was to reach Imphal as quickly as possible. Once he reached Imphal and set up his Government there, I have it from General Kawabe personally, the Japanese Government had fully agreed that political and military operations would be completely under Netaji's command. Once that



happened there would be a revolt in India many times more powerful than the Quit India Movement. But the operations failed due to the failure, among other reasons, of the Japanese Commander in the field to compel the Anglo-American forces to escape from Imphal.

We must admit that the British Government fully succeeded in completely blacking out the news about the struggle of the Azad Hind Fauj on Indian soil. The Communist Party not only supported the British in this but went farther in blackening Netaji's image.

As to the speaker's query whether Netaji was ultimately disillusioned about the Axis powers, I want to say that Netaji never had any illusions about them. There was therefore no question of his being disillusioned. He did not have the illusion of linking the fate of his struggle with the fate of the Axis powers. Otherwise he would not have said in his last broadcast that the defeat of Japan was not the defeat of the Azad Hind Fauj, that there would be a post-war revolution in India and that India would be free before long.

I would of course be interested to know of any re-evaluation of Netaji by the Communists. But in seeking a re-assessment of Netaji by the Communists, how can we get away from an objective assessment of the assessors themselves, the role of the Communists in the Indian National Movement. In the course of our struggle the Communist Party of India had played either the role of opposition, or in the two crucial national movements, viz., the Quit India and the Azad Hind Movements, the role of national betrayal.

*Mr. Gautam Chattopadhyay* : As regards Mr. Borra's observations, I never suggested that there was at any time a united front of ideology between Subhas Chandra Bose and the Communists. Subhas Chandra Bose never sought it. To the best of my knowledge, the Indian Communists never sought it and will never seek it.

I am thankful to Mr. Hauner for his comments. I shall certainly pursue and ask others to pursue his suggestion that records, if any, of Moscow broadcasts to India during the war should be studied.

As for Mr. Pradip Bose's contribution, there is no factual statement. His is a general statement, a dig, an age-worn dig, at the Indian Communist Movement as always towing the line of a foreign country. I will choose to ignore it in this seminar because history will absolve the Communists.

Mr. Samar Guha's questions and observations are quite relevant. But to answer his profound question, namely, an evaluation of the Indian National Movement and the total role of the Communists in it, will take a very long time which the Chairman will not allow me. I should however like to say only this without going into a heated controversy. As to when the Communists were insignificant, as to when they were totally opposed to the national movement, etc. these are questions which involve the



undivided Communist party because we are dealing with the period upto independence. Ordinary members, provincial committee members and central committee members of the party, who spent years in British prisons including Andaman would total several thousands. It would be a travesty of the anti-imperialist movement to call such a party or its members agents of British imperialism. I shall depend on history to defend the record of the Indian Communist party which had more members in Andaman jail than any other party could claim.



## APPENDIX 1\*

INTERNATIONAL PRESS CORRESPONDENCE Vol. 13  
No. 52. 1st December 1933*The New Party of Bose and what should be our attitude to it.*

In a printed appeal or, rather presidential speech, to the Third Indian Political Conference, which gathered in London on June 10, 1933, Subhas Bose tried to explain the causes of the defeat of the National Congress. He advanced the proposal of forming a new party under the name of socialist party. At the present time millions of toilers are now summing up the experience and results of the liberation movement of recent years. They are thinking very hard as to what to do next. What is the correct path of liberating the country from British oppression and exploitation? What to do so as not to be left again in the lurch? To help the millions of enslaved toilers of India, we must answer this appeal of Bose. For this, the so-called new policy of Bose does not help the struggle for independence. On the contrary, it only leads to a further enslavement of the toiling masses.

And thus the difference between Gandhi and Bose is only that the latter wishes to make a compromise on better terms; Bose recommends to have stronger nerves and not to be afraid to use the mass movement a bit more than Gandhi and the other congress leaders are prepared to do. "Even if the leaders wanted a compromise (referring to the Irwin-Gandhi Agreement), they should have waited for a more suitable moment, and such a moment would undoubtedly have arrived if the campaign had continued another six months or year" (page 3). To use the pressure of the mass movement on the British imperialists for a few months more so as to make a more advantageous agreement, that is the essence of the "militancy" of Bose. This is the political essence of the philosophy and strategy of Bose. It is no accident that he and Gandhi and all the rest of the bourgeois leaders agree—that revolutionary violence should be excluded from the arsenal of struggle of the toiling masses.

Finally, there is the third group—Bose and Co. Bose is prepared to go just a little further than the rights, but in practice he supports the policy of participation in the Legislative Assembly. Bose tries to play the role of Deshbandhu Das. However, Bose covers up his disorganising work with radical phrases.

Why was the Socialist ( ? ) party of Bose formed and what are its social functions ?

\* Appendices have been obtained with the kind cooperation of Doctor Gangadhar Adhikari and Shri Chinmohan Sehanovis from the CPI Archives, Ajoy Bhawan, New Delhi, GC



It is quite simple to explain this. The new treachery of the Congress and the miserable concessions of British imperialism have caused discontent among the various classes of the people. Even among the bourgeoisie there are groups which like Bose, think that the concessions are too small and the negotiations were not successfully carried on, which demand greater firmness and greater insistence in the negotiations with the imperialists.

Among the students, as a result of the discontent, a tendency is growing towards socialism towards revolutionary Marxism. At Bose's native town, in Calcutta, in 1933 the students for the first time held a May Day demonstration and then joined in the common demonstration with the revolutionary workers. Among the workers, the position of the congressites is weakening, as is shown by the experience of the trade unions on the G.I.P. and the B.B. and C.I. Railways. In these circumstances, the social role of the party of Bose is to strengthen the position of the bourgeoisie, to advance a new leadership which will be firmer and more skilful in the negotiations with the British Imperialists, which will not so rapidly fall into a panic as Gandhi sometimes does. At the same time, the party of Bose has the aim of carrying with it those revolutionary intellectuals who are leaving the National Congress. The function of the party of Bose is to hinder the revolutionary intellectuals and the workers from joining the ranks of the Communist Party to play the role of another barrier in the path of the development of the Communist Party, to hinder the formation of the C.P. of India.



## APPENDIX 2

NATIONAL FRONT. Vol. I No. 36. October 23, 1938

*Our Needs and Our Duties* : Subhas Chandra Bose

If we analyse the secret of the influence and strength of the Indian National Congress today, we come down to three factors ;—

- (1) the large membership of the Congress,
- (2) the organisation and discipline of the Congress, and
- (3) the spirit of service and sacrifice demonstrated by Congressmen during the last fifty-three years.

Since its birth in 1885, the Congress has made considerable headway and has brought the Indian people nearer to their goal of Swaraj or Independence. But though we are within sight of power, there is yet a struggle ahead of us. If we desire that this struggle should be the last hurdle in our march towards freedom, we have to do three things. The membership of the Congress should be so enlarged as to embrace the vast majority of our countrymen. Our organisation and discipline have to be perfected and last, but not least, we have to be prepared for greater suffering and sacrifice.

In this short article, I desire to deal mainly with the first of the above three requisites. In a political organisation which uses the method of non-violence, as opposed to armed struggle, the question of numbers assumes great importance. The ultimate weapon in a non-violent struggle is Satyagraha or mass civil disobedience which presupposes the rallying of the masses under one banner. In proportion as the Congress has been able to draw the masses to its fold, it has increased its influence and strength. When the first session of the Congress was held in Bombay in 1885, only a handful of middle and upper class intellectuals assembled on the occasion. Today a session of the Congress can draw as many people as it can accommodate.

There is no doubt that Mahatma Gandhi was the first leader to bring the Congress into intimate contact with the masses of this country. I do not propose to attempt an analysis of the personality and programme of Mahatma Gandhi which enabled him to attract the masses towards the Congress in an unprecedented manner. The process which the Mahatma set on foot has now to be brought to fruition. How can this be done ? There are so many false and extraneous issues which tend to mislead the dumb millions, to create differences and dissensions and to emphasise fissiparous tendencies. Our weapon against them is a two-fold one—political and socio-economic. On the political side we must stress the nationalist appeal as against the lure of narrow communalism. We must all learn to think and feel in terms of the nation and not in terms of a group or sect.



On the socio-economic side, we must open the eyes of our illiterate countrymen to the fact that despite differences of religion, caste or language, our economic problems and grievances are the same and can be solved only when we are free and have a national Government, truly representative of the will of the people. It is absolutely necessary to stress the economic issues which are common to us all and which cut across communal divisions and barriers. The problems of poverty and unemployment, of illiteracy and disease of taxation and indebtedness affect alike the Hindus and Muslims and other sections of the people and it should be easy to explain to our masses that their solution depends on the prior solution of the political problem. i.e., on the establishment of a national, popular and democratic Government.

Scientific mass propaganda on the above lines, if persisted in, is sure to bring the people of all religions and castes under the banner of Swaraj. When the masses come to the Congress in their thousands and lacs, the influence and strength of the Congress will increase proportionately. The only problems that will then remain will be to organise and discipline this vast membership and prepare them for the suffering and sacrifice which the future struggle for Swaraj will involve.

There is, however, a relevant question to which I should like to refer here. The new members that will come into the Congress as a result of scientific propaganda should not be like dumb-driven cattle. They should be live human beings, with plenty of initiative. If the individual members lack initiative, the Committees which they will form will also lack dynamism. In that event, democracy may prove to be a failure. The success of democracy in India depends on the initiative of the individual and on the dynamism of the subordinate Congress Committees. If the initiative has to come from the top and not from the bottom, democracy may be well nigh reduced to totalitarianism. But that is not what we are working for. Let us, therefore, remember that individual initiative has to be unceasingly encouraged and developed and subordinate Congress Committees have to be maintained in a state of eternal vigilance and activity.

Our needs and our duties at the present time are simple indeed. But to fulfil them requires herculean efforts. There is no time to lose ; let us therefore put our shoulders to the wheel at once.



## APPENDIX 3

“NATIONAL FRONT” Vol. 2 No. 1. Sunday, Feb. 12, 1939

*Carry forward the heritage of struggle.*

My heartiest congratulations to the *National Front* during the period of its existence and am glad to be able to say that it has consistently stood for the national line of struggle, the line of our great National Congress. I also appreciate the singular services it has rendered for the unification and consolidation of Left Forces within the Congress.

There are darker days of trial and uncompromising struggle ahead of us. While British Imperialism is trying to tighten its hold over India with the chains of the Federation, there are tendencies of vacillation and compromise within our own ranks. Against the increasing fighting consciousness of the masses the tendencies of compromise and vacillation may try to hurl the weapons of moral coercion and non-cooperation.

The unity of the national fight for Independence must be maintained. Let this be clearly understood that we of the Left do not hanker for positions, we do not want to capture the Congress and to oust the Right. We want to retain them, even at the very front of our movement. We insist only on the heritage of the struggle of the Congress being carried forward.

Let this be the message of the “National Front” to the people.

Please accept my best wishes.

Sd/- Subhas Chandra Bose



## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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*Bhagat Ram Talwar* comes from a well-known Pathan family known for their involvement and sacrifice in India's struggle for freedom and is a brother of the legendary revolutionary hero and martyr Hari Kishen. He was an active member of the Kirti Kisan Party and the Forward Bloc prior to World War II. He has a good command of the Pushtu language and extensive knowledge about the various tribes inhabiting territories between what was formerly British India and Afghanistan. He was chosen to escort Bose from Peshawar to Kabul during the latter's escape from India in 1941. Subsequently he functioned for some time as Bose's contact man in Kabul.

*Alexander Werth* had his early schooling in Berlin. He studied law at Heidelberg, Munich, Grenoble, Göttingen and Berlin and was finally called to the Bar from Middle Temple in London in 1934. After serving in the army in 1939-40, he joined the Information Department of the German Foreign Office dealing with the British Empire and USA. He was subsequently taken in the Special India Division of the Foreign Office where he became a close associate of Adam von Trott zu Solz. He had the opportunity at that time of working closely with Subhas Chandra Bose. He was the first foreigner to deliver the Netaji Oration in Calcutta in 1969 and was made an honorary member of Netaji Research Bureau. He edited the German biography of Bose "*Der Tiger Indiens*". He died in December 1973.

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# INDEX

- Abad Khan, 152, 154, 157, 159-161, 166, 223-224, 229-230
- Abdul Majid Khan, 158, 277
- Abdul Razak, 230, 232
- Abdul Sobahan, Haji, 200-202, 204, 206, 216-219, 236
- Abdur Rezzak Khan, 430
- Acchar Singh Cheena, 152-157, 445, 447
- Afandi, Abdul Latif, 230-232
- Afzal Khan, Sher, 216, 219, 236, 239
- Aga Khan,  
Nazi leaders, meeting with, 273
- Ahmed, Muzaffar, 442
- Akbar Shah, 113, 229-230
- Netaji's escape, role in, 157-160, 224
- Sisir Bose, meeting with, 122
- All India Trade Union Congress, 428, 429, 441, 448
- Alsdorf, Dr., 294
- Amanullah, King, 276
- Amery, L.S.,  
Maisky, talk with, 449
- Amin, Haji Mohammad, 172-174, 221-222
- Andaman and Nicobar Islands, 323
- Anesaki Masaharu, Buddhologist, 87
- Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League, 64, 437
- Anushilan Samity,  
foundation of, 109
- Anzilotti, 212-213, 235
- Arise, General,  
Netaji Bose's coming to Asia, 320
- Ashikawa Masayoshi, 87
- Aung San, 57, 59, 437
- Anti-fascist revolution, leader of, 64
- Bose, Sarat, meeting with, 65
- Welcome speech, 69  
(Appendix)
- Bose, Subhas, attitude towards, 65
- Bose, Subhas, meeting with, 1940, 57
- escape to Japan, 57
- Azad, Abul Kalam, Maulana,  
Calcutta Congress, 441
- Azad Hind Fauj,  
See under Indian National Army
- Azad Hind Government,  
See under Provisional Government of Azad Hind
- Azad Hind Radio, 282, 290
- Ba Maw, 57, 59
- Bose, Subhas, relation with, 59-62, 65
- Bagai, Vashnu Das, 95
- Baksi, Satya Ranjan, 148
- mission in north-west frontier, and, 227-228
- Baksi, Sudhir Ranjan, 148-149
- Balbahadur, Pandit, 224
- Bandopadhyaya, Jatindra Mohan, 109
- Banerjea, Surendra Nath,  
editor of the Bengalee, 32
- Barkatullah, Moulana, 77
- Bengal Pact, 18
- Bengal Provincial Congress Committee, 431
- coalition ministry, and, 17
- split, 17
- Bengal Volunteer Group, 148-149
- Bhaduri, Panchu Gopal, 431
- Bhagat Ram Talwar, 277
- reports to Bose, Sarat and Sisir, 145-146
- Bhattacharjee, Kalidas, 444
- Bobi, Sato, 93
- Bormann, Martin,  
Hitler's remarks, notes of, 271
- Bose, A.C., Professor, 76
- Bose, Asoke Nath, 139-142
- Bose, Aurobinda, 132, 134, 143
- Bose, Bivabati,  
Bose, Subhas Chandra, and, 111, 179, 227
- Bose, Dwijendra Nath, 128, 132-134, 143
- Bose, Ila, 115, 127-128, 132, 145
- Bose, Rash Behari,  
Bose, Subhas, and, 298, 320
- Japan, during World War I, in, 94-95, 97, 100-101
- Singh, Mohan, clash with, 317
- Thakur, P.N., as, 82-88



- Bose, Sarat Chandra,  
     achievements and career, 4-5, 10  
     arrest of, 1941, 21  
     Aung San, meeting with, 65  
         Sarat Bose's speech, 73  
         (Appendix)  
     Bengal Legislative Assembly, elected member, 19  
     Bhagat Ram, meeting with, 145-146  
     Bose, Subhas, and, 2, 111, 116, 117  
     Bose Subhas' escape, and, 179, 185-186  
         Subhas' message to, reescape, 218, 226-228  
     Congress Working Committee member, 18  
     Interim Government member, 18  
     Japanese, contact with, 147-148  
     mission in north-west frontier, and, 238  
     Nehru, controversy with, on Communal Award, 19-20  
     partition of Bengal, 22  
     revolutionaries, and, 12  
     United Bengal, movement for, 21  
 Bose, Sisir Kumar,  
     Netaji's escape, and, 158, 179, 186, 218, 226  
 Bose, Subhas Chandra,  
     All India Trade Union Congress, President, 428, 441, 448  
     Andaman Islands, in, 451  
     Asia, coming to, 299-302, 318-320  
     Aung San, meeting with, 1940, 57  
     Axis, alliance with, Ba Maw's view, 62  
     Azad Hind Government, proclamation of, 322  
     Azad Hind Radio, broadcasts over, 290, 296  
     Ba Maw, relation with, 59-62, 65  
     Bose, Sarat Chandra, and, 2, 111, 116-117  
     Bose, Bivabati, and, 111  
     Bose, Rash Behari, and, 298, 320  
     Britain, future relations with, 254  
     British rule in India, estimate of, 249-250  
     Burmese independence, on, 59  
     Burmese prisons, 1925-27, in, 55  
     charisma of, 321, 323, 327  
     China, relations with, 255  
     Comintern, invitation to, 425  
     Communist assessment of, 436, 449  
     Communist Party of India, on, 453  
     Congress, Calcutta, role in, 427-428, 441, 443-444  
     Congress, Haripura, presidential speech at, 252, 259  
     Congress, Madras, role in, 426  
     Congress President, 14-15  
     Congress President, resignation, 17, 432  
     Congress split, and, 264-265  
     Cripps Mission, speeches on, 293  
     Declaration on Free India by Axis, and, 276, 278-279, 285, 288  
     defeat, after, 62  
     educational career, 6-9  
     escape from India, planning and preparations, 112-134  
         Calcutta to Gomoh, 134-142  
         aftermath in Calcutta, 142-151  
         Peshawar to Kabul, 159-177  
         in Kabul, 177-220  
     escape from India, reasons for, 250-251, 266  
     Forward Bloc, and, 433, 452-453  
     Forward Bloc, formation of, 17  
     Free India Movement, beginnings in Axis Europe, 275-276  
     Free India, problems of, 252-253  
     Gandhi, M. K., difference with, 14-15, 27  
     German attack on Soviet Union, reaction to, 255-256, 280  
     Greater East Asia Conference, speech at, 322  
     Hitler, and, 256  
     Hitler, meeting with, 297-298  
         Record of Schmidt, 310  
         (Appendix)  
     Imphal campaign, influence on, 323-326, 453-454  
     Independence for India League, and, 427  
     Indian Civil Service, resignation from, 9  
     Japan, attitude towards, 274-275  
     Japanese Order of First Merit of the Rising Sun, refusal of, 325



- Bose, Subhas Chandra, (contd.)  
   Jinnah, talk with, 251  
   Kawabe, and, 325-326  
   Laurel, Jose, help to, 451-452  
   Mahajati Sadan, concern for, 120  
   message on leaving Burma, 65  
   Mussolini, meetings with, 273, 298  
   Nazism and Hitler, attitude to, 272-274  
   Oaten incident, 6, 33, 35, 36  
   Presidency Jail, in, 112-113  
   'Quit India' Movement, and, 301  
   refusal to fight Burmese, 64  
   revolutionaries, and, 12  
   Ribbentrop, and, 275, 281, 284, 289, 293, 296-297, 299  
   Roy, Dilip Kumar, and, 3, 8  
   *Samyavada*, and, 273  
   Schedai, relation with, 282, 285  
   Soviet Union, relations with, 255  
   Shigemitsu, and, 320-321  
   Sugiyama, and, 320-321  
   Terauchi, and, 323  
   Thakins, popularity with, 55-57  
   *The Indian Struggle*, 13, 27, 430-431  
   *Third Indian Political Conference*, London, 1933, 430  
   Tojo, relation with, 320-324  
   Toye, Hugh, study by, 1  
   United States of America, and, 254-255  
   World War II, assessment of international situation, 265-266  
*Bose, Subhas Chandra, and Japan*  
   Asian Bureau, Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs publication, 329 (Appendix)  
 Bose, Dr. Sunil Chandra, 120  
 Bradley, Ben, 431, 446  
 British Embassy, Tokyo,  
   Indian revolutionaries in Japan during World War I, and, 81-85, 88-92, 94, 97-98, 101-102  
 Burma Freedom Bloc,  
   Forward Bloc, similarity and contact with, 57  
   foundation of, 57  
 Burma Independence Army,  
   formation and role of, 58  
 Burmese Government,  
   Azad Hind Government, relations with, 60-61  
 Caveeshar, Sardul Singh,  
   Netaji's letter to, 218, 225, 228  
 Chadbourne, 93  
 Chakravarty, C. K., 92, 98  
 Chakrabarty, Gopen, 442  
 Chattopadhyay, Virendranath, 423, 424  
   League Against Imperialism, and, 268, 427  
 Ciano, Count,  
   Indian Declaration, views on, 293, 295  
 Communal Award, 19  
 Communist International, 424-425, 429, 450  
 Communist Party of Burma, 56, 437  
 Communist Party of India, 428, 431-432, 448-449, 452-455  
   Bose Subhas' estimate of, 453  
   Bose Subhas' re-election as Congress President, and, 432  
   Forward Bloc, and, 433-434  
   Quit India and Azad Hind Movements, role in, 453-454  
   Soviet Union, and, 450-451  
   World War II, policy on, 445-448  
 Congress,  
   *See under* Indian National Congress  
 Congress High Command,  
   *See under* Congress Working Committee  
 Congress Socialist Party, 15, 264, 448, 450, 452  
 Congress Working Committee, 14-15  
   coalition ministry in Bengal, and, 17, 20  
 Creshini, 235, 238-239  
   Bose Subhas' escape, and, 215-217, 219-220  
 Cripps Mission,  
   Axis policy on, 293-294  
   Bose's speeches on, 293  
 Dange, S.A., 425-426  
   Bolshevik Revolution, impact of, 423  
   C.P.I. delegation to Stalin, 446, 448  
   Comintern, difference with, 429  
   Comintern, invitation to, 425



- Das, Chiraranjan,  
Communist International, invitation to, 425
- Das, Chittaranjan,  
Bengal Pact, 18  
Gaya Congress, speech at, 424  
Hindu-Muslim problem, and, 18  
Indian revolutionary movement, and, 109  
Swaraj Party, 11
- Das, Taraknath, 91-97
- Deshabandhu C. R. Das,  
*See under Das, Chittaranjan*
- Deshpande, S. V., 428, 429
- Dimitrov, 452
- Dobama Aslwayne (We Burmans Association)  
Indian National Congress, and, 55  
World War II, policy on, 56  
*See also Thakins*
- Dutt, Rajani Palme, 437, 445, 447
- Dutta, B N., 424
- Dutta, Bhupendra Nath,  
Indian revolutionary movement, on, 109
- Eden Hindu Hostel, 31
- Fazlul Huq  
coalition ministry under, 20
- Forward Bloc, 264, 298, 432, 452-453  
Burma Freedom Bloc, similarity and contact with, 57  
C.P.I., and, 433-434  
formation of, 17
- Free India Centre,  
foundation of, 281-282
- Free India Provisional Government,  
*See under Provisional Government of Azad Hind*
- Freedom Bloc,  
*See under Burma Freedom Bloc*
- Fuertwaengler, F J., 298, 300
- Fujiwara Iwaichi, 289  
Bose's coming to Asia, and, 318  
I.N.A., formation of, and, 316, 317
- Gandhi, M.K., 288, 291, 298-299  
Bose, Subhas, difference with, 14-15, 27  
Congress, Calcutta, role in, 427, 441, 444  
Congress, and, 11  
Congress split, and, 265, 453  
Goering's attack on, 273  
Hitler, letters to, 274  
partition of Bengal, and, 22
- Gandhism,  
Thakins' attitude to, 56
- Ganguly, Bimal, 442
- Ganguly, Santimoy,  
mission in north-west frontier, 230-231, 233-235, 237-238,  
Report of, 243 (Appendix)
- German Central Archives, Potsdam, 436
- German Foreign Office,  
Documents on Bose's escape, 240 (Appendix)
- German Legation in Kabul,  
Bose Subhas' escape, and, 185-189, 191, 220, 239
- Ghose, Aurobindo, 109
- Ghose, Prafulla Chandra, 11, 17
- Ghosh, Ajoy Kumar,  
jail document, 446-447
- Ghosh, Benoy, 433
- Ghosh, K.K.,  
I N.A., study of, 1
- Ghulam Murtaza, 232
- Ghulamul Rahman, 231-232
- Gilbert, Dr. Irene,  
Oaten, and, 32
- Gill, Duleep Singh, 424
- Goebbels, 268  
'Indian action', on, 291
- Goering,  
Gandhi, attack on, 273
- Goswami, Dharani, 442
- Government of India,  
Indian revolutionaries in Japan during World War I, and, 89, 90, 99-102
- Greater East Asia Conference, 60, 322
- Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere, 286, 303, 316
- Greene, Sir Conyngham, 81, 84, 86, 91
- Grey, Sir Edward, 85-86
- Groos, Admiral, 286
- Gupta, Heramba Lal, 82-88, 92, 97, 101
- Gupta, Nalini, 425



- Halder, Gopal, 433  
 Halim, 442  
 Hassel, Ulrich von,  
     diaries of, 270-271  
 Hikari Kikan, 322  
 Hitler Adolf, 263, 450  
     Barbarossa, priority to, 278-280  
     Bose's coming to Asia, views on, 320  
     Bose, Subhas, meeting with, 297-298  
         Record of Schmidt, 310 (Appendix)  
     Bose's view of, 256  
     India, views on, 267-272, 302  
     Indian Declaration, views on, 281, 283, 287, 293, 295-296  
     Indian Legion, and, 436, 452  
     Japanese and German Naval Staff, difference with, 292  
     Mussolini, meeting at Salzburg with, 295  
     Oshima, meetings with, 285-286  
 Ho Chi Minh, 437  
 Holwell monument,  
     movement for removal of, 153, 156  
 Hossain, Sanobar, 222, 232  
  
 Imphal campaign, 323-326, 453-454  
 Independence for India League, 426-427  
 Indian Association of Tokyo, 87  
 Indian Educational Service, 29, 31  
 Indian Independence League, 59, 289, 298, 317  
 Indian Information Bureau, 268  
 Indian Legion, 285, 301, 436  
     formation of, 282  
 Indian National Army, 59, 62, 302, 318, 320, 436  
     Burma, in, 61  
     formation of, 317  
     Ghosh, K. K., study by, 1  
     Imphal campaign, role in, 323-325  
     Japanese policy towards, 316  
     military status of, 326-327  
     refusal to fight Burmese national army, 64  
     Tojo's attitude to, 321, 322  
 Indian National Congress, 10  
     Ahmedabad Session, 1921, 426  
     Axis Powers, attitude to, 287  
     Indian National Congress (contd.)  
         Calcutta Session, 1928, 427-428, 441-444  
         Declarations on Japanese aggression in China, 275  
         Declarations on Nazi aggression, 273  
         Dobama Aistayone, and, 55  
         Gandhi, M. K., and, 11  
         Gaya Session, 1922, 424, 425, 426  
         Haripura session, 1938, 252, 259  
         Madras session, 1927, 426  
         Ramgarh session, 1940, 57  
         Tripuri session, 1939, confrontation between left and right, 16, 432  
         Pant Resolution, 16  
     Indian National Council, 281  
     Inukai Tsuyoshi, 91, 96  
     Irwin, Lord, 428  
     Ishii, Japanese Foreign Minister, 85-87  
     Isoda Saburo,  
         I.N.A., and, 322  
     Italian Legation in Kabul,  
         Bose Subhas' escape, and, 209-213, 216, 219  
     Iwakuro Hideo, 324  
         I.N.A., and, 317  
  
 Jain, Ranjit Singh, 100  
 James, Henry Roscher,  
     Principal, Presidency College, 29  
 Japanese Home Ministry,  
     Indian revolutionaries in Japan during World War I, and, 85-86, 96  
 Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs,  
     Indian revolutionaries in Japan during World War I, and, 82-85, 88-89, 91, 93-94, 97-98, 101  
 Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives, 76-77  
 Jinnah, Muhammad Ali, 20  
     Bose, Subhas; talk with, 251  
 Jiwan Lal, 207-208, 212-215, 220  
 Joglekar, K. N., 426  
 Josh, Sohan Singh, 442  
 Joshi, N. M., 428, 441  
 Joshi, P. C., 429, 447  
  
 Kamath, H. V., 435  
 Kamil, Muhammad, 230, 232



- Karr, Surendra Nath, 95  
Katakura, General, 324  
Kawabe, General,  
    Bose, Subhas Chandra, and, 325-326  
Keppler, 283-284  
Kilmarnock, Lord, 84-86  
Kirti Kisan Party,  
    Netaji's escape, and, 152, 154  
Krishna Menon, V. K., 445  
Kuroiwa Shiroku, 83  
Kusinen, 429  
La Motte, 93  
Lahore Fort Prison, 111  
Laurel, Dr. Jose,  
    Bose, Subhas Chandra, and, 451-452  
League against Imperialism, 268, 427  
League of Oppressed Nations, 268  
Lenin, V.I.,  
    anti-imperialist united front, on, 424  
    sectarian departure from, 429  
    Roy, M.N., difference with, 424  
Left Consolidation Committee, 264, 431, 448  
Mahajati Sadan,  
    Subhas Bose's concern for, 120  
Mahatma Gandhi,  
    *See under Gandhi, M.K.*  
Maisky,  
    Amery, talk with, 449  
Makino Jo, 79  
Malhotra, Uttam Chand, 235-236, 238  
    Netaji in Kabul, and, 196, 209, 212-217, 219-221  
Matsuoka, Japanese Foreign Minister, 318  
Maxwell, Reginald, 445  
Mian Akbar Shah,  
    *See under Akbar Shah*  
Mir Ghazan Khan, 230-232  
Miran Jan, 230, 232-233, 237  
Mitra, J. C., 442  
Mitra, P., 109  
Mitra, Radharaman, 442  
Mohammad Shah, 159-160, 174  
Mohani, Maulana Hasarat, 426  
    Calcutta Congress, 441  
Mokham Din, 174-175  
Molotov, 265, 303, 450  
Mondal, Santi Ram, 442  
Mookherjee, Shyama Prasad, 21  
Mukherjee, Abani Nath, 82, 424, 425  
Mukherji, Bankim, 430, 431, 442, 444  
Mussolini, Benito,  
    Bose, Subhas Chandra, meetings with, 273, 298  
    Hitler, meeting at Salzburg with, 295  
    Indian Declaration, views on, 295-296  
Mutaguchi, General, 326  
Nakamaruya Affair,  
    consequences of, 88  
Nambiar, A. C. N., 268  
Nazimuddin, Khwaja, 113  
Nehru, Jawaharlal, 14, 288, 291  
    All India Trade Union Congress, role in, 441, 443, 444, 448  
    Congress, Calcutta, role in, 427-428, 441, 444  
    Congress, Madras, role in, 426  
    Congress split, and, 265  
    controversy with Sarat Bose on Communal Award, 19-20  
    Indian Information Bureau in Berlin, and, 268  
Nehru, Motilal,  
    Calcutta Congress, role in, 441, 444  
Netaji,  
    *See under Bose, Subhas Chandra*  
Netaji Research Bureau, 1, 147  
Nivedita, Sister,  
    Indian revolutionary movement, and, 109  
Nomura, Admiral, 286  
Norman, of British Embassy, Tokyo, 89-95, 97  
Oaten Incident,  
    Bose, Subhas, and, 6, 33, 35, 36  
    Narration by Subhas Bose in "An Indian Pilgrim", 37 (Appendix)  
    Tagore, Rabindra Nath, on, 30  
Okakura Kakuzo  
    Indian revolutionary movement, and, 109



- Okawa Shumei, 86, 93, 96  
 Okazaki, Japanese Consul General  
   in Calcutta, 318  
   contact with Sarat Bose, 147 ~  
 Okuma Shigenobu, Japanese Prime  
   Minister, 87, 92  
 Oshima, 296, 299  
   Bose's coming to Asia, and, 318-  
     320  
   Hitler, meetings with, 285-286  
 Ota, Japanese Consul in Calcutta,  
   contact with Sarat Bose, 147-148  
 Ott, General, 285, 290, 292, 294  
 Patel, Vallabh,ai,  
   Calcutta Congress, 441  
 Petrie, D.,  
   memorandum of, 78  
 Pilger, Hans, 279  
 Pollitt, Harry, 447  
 Prasad, Rajendra,  
   Congress, Calcutta, at, 441  
   Congress President, 17  
 Presidency College, 28-32  
 Presidency College. discipline in,  
   a) Government statement  
   b) Report of the Enquiry Commi-  
     ttee, 39 (Appendix)  
 Provisional Government of Azad  
   Hind, 59  
   Burmese Government, relation  
     with, 59-61  
   decision to drop "Provisional",  
     325  
   Japan's attitude to, 322, 327  
   proclamation of and declaration  
     of war by, 322  
   Rangoon, headquarters at, 60  
   territory of, 323  
 Puri, Swami Satyananda, 289  
 Quaroni, Pietro, 235  
   Bose's escape, and, 210-213  
   Bose, report of talk with, 266-267  
 Quaroni, Mrs. Pietro, 216-217  
 'Quit India' movement,  
   Axis policy on, 299-300  
 Radical League, 448  
 Raeder, Admiral, 278, 292  
 Rai, Lala Lajpat, 79-80, 83-85, 87,  
   95  
 Ram Kishan, 152-154, 156, 159  
 Ramo Devi, 220  
 Ranadive, B. T., 429  
 Rani of Jhansi Regiment, 325  
 Rao, T.K., I.N.A. Intelligence,  
   contact with Sisir Bose, 148-149  
 Rashid Ali el-Gailani, 278  
 Red Trade Union Congress, 429  
 Reventlow, Count, 268  
 Ribbentrop, 265, 292, 450  
   Bose, Subhas Chandra, and, 275,  
     281, 284, 289, 293, 296-297, 299  
   Bose's coming to Asia, and, 320  
   German foreign propaganda, on,  
     290  
   Indian Declaration, views on, 283,  
     290, 295-296  
 Rommel, 283, 288  
 Rosenberg, 273  
 Roy, Anil, 218  
 Roy, Dr. B. C., 11, 17  
 Roy, Dilip Kumar,  
   Bose, Subhas Chandra, on, 3, 8  
 Roy, Dinesh, 442  
 Roy, Leela, 218  
 Roy, M. N., 94, 97, 424, 428  
   Lenin, difference with, 424  
 Saberwal, Kesho Ram, 93, 95, 97  
   Bose Netaji, and, 109-110  
   Sahay, A.M., difference with, 110  
 Sahay, Ananda Mohan,  
   Saberwal, difference with, 110  
 Saindra, Gurcharan Singh, 224-225,  
   228  
 Sammunder Khan, 231  
 Sanyal, Sachin, 426  
 Sarkar, Nalini Ranjan, 11  
 Sarkar, Susobhan, 447  
 Schedai, Mohammed Iqbal,  
   Bose Subhas C., relation with,  
     282, 285  
   broadcasts from Rome, 288  
   downfall of, 301  
   silencing of, 291  
 Scottish Church College, 32  
 Sengupta, J. M., 29  
   Calcutta Congress, role in, 443  
 Seth, Hira Lal,  
   Bose's attitude to Fascism, on,  
     272  
 Sharifuddin, 437  
 Shastri, Hari Prasad, 93



- Shidehara Kijuro, 90-91  
 Shigemitsu,  
     Bose, Subhas, and, 320-321  
 Singeravelu Chettiar, 425-426  
 Singh, Baba Gurmukh, 152  
 Singh, Baldev, 155  
 Singh, Bhagwan, 80-82, 83, 85, 95, 97  
 Singh, Mohan, 289  
     I.N.A., formation of, 317  
     under house arrest, 317  
 Singh, Moni, 430  
 Singh, Pritam, 289, 317  
 Singh, Sodhi Mohinder,  
     mission in north-west frontier, 226,  
     228-230, 233-235, 237-239  
 Sitaramavva, Pattabhi  
     contest for Congress presidency,  
         14-15  
 Soekarno, 437  
 Soviet Communist Party, 423  
 Soviet Embassy in Kabul,  
     Bose unable to contact, 180-185,  
         186-187, 204  
 Special India Department (of Ger-  
     man Foreign Ministry), 281-283,  
         286, 291, 298, 300  
     Indian Declaration, and, 285  
 Spratt, Philip, 429  
 Stalin,  
     C.P.I. delegation to, 446, 448  
     World War II, and, 449  
 Strasser brothers, 268  
 Sugiyama,  
     Bose, Subhas, and, 320-321  
 Sun-Yat-Sen, 81, 86  
 Swadeshi agitation, 10  
 Swami, N G., 148  
 Swaraj Party, 11  
  
 Tagore, Rabindra Nath,  
     Oaten Incident, on, 36  
 Tagore, Surendranath,  
     Indian revolutionary movement,  
         and, 109  
 Talib, Niranjan Singh, 155, 157  
 Terao Kyo, 86  
 Terauchi, Field Marshal Count.  
     Bose, Subhas Chandra, and, 323  
     Imphal campaign, and, 324  
 Thakin Aung San,  
     *See* under Aung San  
  
 Thakin Nu, Burmese Foreign Mini-  
     ster,  
     Azad Hind Government, support  
         to, 59  
 Thakins,  
     Bose, Subhas, agreement with,  
         55-57  
     Gandhism, attitude, to, 56  
 Thierfelder, Dr.,  
     Bose Subhas' letter to, 273  
 Thomas, Herr, 189-192, 196-197,  
     202-205, 208-210  
 Tilak, Bal Gangadhar,  
     Bolshevik Revolution, impact of,  
         423  
 Tojo, 294  
     Bose, Subhas Chandra, relation  
         with, 320-324  
     India; pronouncements on, 290,  
         319, 321-322  
 Tokugawa, I M., 83-84, 88-91, 93-94  
 Tokutomi Iichiro, 93  
 Toyama Mitsuru, 86, 88  
 Toye, Hugh,  
     Oaten Incident, on, 33  
     Bose, Subhas, study of, 1  
 Trott, Adam von,  
     'Indian Action', on, 282, 284,  
         291  
  
 Uehara Etsujiro, 96  
 Ufficio India, 281  
     Indian Declaration, and, 285  
 Ummar Khan, 230, 232  
 Upadhyay, S., 433  
  
 Weizsaecker, 281  
 Wenger, Dr., 220  
 Wirsing, Dr. Giselher, 255-256  
 Woernann, 280-281, 285  
 Workers' and Peasants' Party of  
     India, 427, 441  
  
 Yakub, 202-203, 207-209, 214-215  
 Yamamoto, Colonel, 288  
     Bose in Berlin, and, 318, 320  
     Bose, Subhas in Japan, and, 320-  
         322  
  
 Ziarat Gul, 231



























